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THE NEW
STATESMAN
AND NATION
The Week-end Review

Vol. XXX. No. 766. [Incorporating THE ATHENÆUM] SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1945 [Registered at the G.P.O. as a newspaper] SIXPENCE

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SPREADING TO-MORROW'S JAM

Searching for additional incentives to harder work and increased production, yet mindful of the need to guard against the immediate danger of an unrestrained flood of purchasing power, Mr. Dalton has done a neat job. In his interim Budget, whose aims he expounded with admirable clarity in his broadcast, he has distributed necessarily limited favours with a hand, broadly speaking, impartial. Two million wage-earners next year will escape from P.A.Y.E.'s clutches, and the rest of the working-class will be encouraged to put their backs into it by having a considerably smaller slice removed from their pay-packets. The well-to-do middle class (and even the rich) will benefit appreciably, though relief rightly diminishes progressively as incomes mount; and Excess Profits repayments—coupled with a big cut in E.P.T. itself—will furnish industrialists with fresh funds, which they are enjoined to use in re-equipping their plant, not in adding to dividends.

On the other hand, indirect taxation, save for concessions on some kitchen and heating equipment needed for housing, is maintained at its present deliberately restrictive level, appropriate (as it is) to the existing scarcity of consumers' goods and the need both to economise in dollars and to divert as much production as possible to the export trade. In this connection we welcome the substitution of the cubic capacity for the H.P. tax on motor cars, but trust that the Chancellor will listen favourably, as he promised, to the case for eliminating finicking graduations in the new tax. If exports are the target, the aim should be, not merely the removal of a tax which distorted engine development, but also, by simplifying the new tax, to curb the British motor industry's tendency to produce a wasteful, costly multiplicity of models.

With the general lines of the Government's fiscal plan most Socialists will concur. They may question particular points. Was it wise, for example, to give incomes up to £2,500 a year, including even "unearned" rentier incomes, the full benefit of the reduction in the standard rate of income tax, if the consequence had to be the Chancellor's inability to restore the pre-war earned income allowance? This omission is an odd departure from the principle of "added incentives." Again, is it socially just that the one class excluded from the tiniest helping of to-morrow's jam should be the very poor—the infirm, the old and the unemployed—to whose case indirect taxation is alone relevant? Perhaps larger earned income allowances and some "breakfast table" concessions (in addition to increased Old Age Pensions) will figure in the April "surprises" at which Mr. Dalton hinted.

These are details in a picture which, so far as concerns the distribution of the incidence of taxation, has received, and merited, pretty general approval on all sides. The real question which remains moot, as we see it, is whether the Government can attain, by its fiscal policy, what Mr. Dalton declared to be its prime objective—stability in the cost of living. From one point of view the question cannot be answered at all, until we know, next April, how much of its (at present undisclosed) expenditure in 1946–47 the Treasury will cover by borrowing. If a large unbridged gap between revenue and outgoings persists for long, some degree of further inflation will be almost inevitable.

But this is only one side of the problem. The real cost of living is determined not only by the prices of a few controlled basic foods, for whose artificial stabilisation Mr. Dalton expects to pay, "at least," the formidable sum of £300 millions in subsidies next year. It is measured by a much wider range of costs of goods and services, which influence—and in turn are directly affected by—the level of wages and the consequent cost of labour. Does Mr. Dalton imply, by his emphasis on "stability," that the *rates* of wages should be "frozen" generally at their present level, regardless of alterations in length of time worked, or the loss of war bonuses? Organised labour will emphatically reject that proposition. As we suggest in a leading article, a basic figure for average *earnings* might be selected by the Government as an appropriate corollary to its price policy; this would at least furnish a guiding principle in negotiations for settlement of individual wage-rates. Until some such principle is found and accepted, Mr. Dalton's "stability," at the present or *any* level, must be regarded as an optimistic promise, not a certainty.

Hungary and the Allies

From East and West diversely motivated Allied "interventions" are at work in Hungary, and have sharply clashed. First, there is the question of the way in which the forthcoming General Election should be held. The insistence of Marshal Voroshilov that voting should be for a single list, with a previously decided proportion of Party candidates, has been interpreted by the Foreign Office and the State Department as final evidence that Moscow, disconcerted by the success of the Agrarian (Smallholders') Party in the "free" municipal elections at Budapest, has decided to veto political liberty in Hungary, and to impose on the country a regime in which "reliable" Communists have representation out of all proportion to the number of their adherents. This has proved an over-simplification, and a compromise plan for elections with a Coalition "coupon" has now apparently been accepted. The salient feature in Hungary to-day is the speed at which the country's whole economy is slipping towards anarchy. Circulation of currency is soaring to astronomic figures; food shortage, arising in part from the needs of the large Russian army of occupation, is being aggravated by peasant hoarding; and reparations have taken a crippling toll of Hungary's industrial resources. In these circumstances elections on free-for-all Party lines, with the presence of the Red Army a probable electoral controversy, would only too easily have led to disorders; and, on calculations of pure military security, Voroshilov was intelligibly taking no chances. All Parties now agree that only a broad, evenly proportioned Coalition, on the lines of that now in office, can carry Hungary through her immediate economic difficulties. To give the "Eckhardists" and other reactionary elements among the Agrarians a chance to exploit to the limit, along the old lines of Magyar irredentism, the discontents of a hungry, desperate population would be the greatest disservice that could be rendered to Social democracy in Hungary.

Moscow's New Order

It is, however, in relation not only to the Hungarian elections that London and Washington have chosen to advertise their disagreement with Moscow. Mr. Bevin and Mr. Byrnes have jointly and severally protested against the proposed five-year Soviet-Hungarian trade pact; and the grounds for their protest go far beyond the contention that, on a point of procedure, it was not within the competence of one of the Big Three unilaterally to conclude an economic agreement with an occupied ex-enemy country. Although full details of the pact, which still awaits ratification by the Hungarian Cabinet, have not yet been published, it clearly conforms pretty closely to the pattern of the agreement concluded between Russia and Rumania. That is, it provides for the participation of Russian capital and technical assistance in rehabilitating Hungary's nationalised industries, for the importation of raw materials from the U.S.S.R., and for the guarantee of an assured Russian market for Hungarian products. In other words, Moscow is adopting (with Socialist modifications) the trade technique which Germany before the war applied to the countries of South-East Europe: they are to find economic stability at the cost of being geared into the Russian mechanism. Naturally this re-emergence of "New Order" bilateralism is repugnant to the State Department—apprehensive, as it is, lest British commercial policy follow similar lines in relation to the sterling area. Mr. Bevin, we presume, is protesting at the economic consolidation of Russia's sphere of influence east of the Stettin-Trieste line. If their argument was that Russia's trade pacts are designed simply to exploit her neighbours, "protests" would have greater validity. But there is no proof that this is the case; and, for better or worse, the U.S.S.R. alone is in a position to assist economically countries situated east of the political Chinese Wall which the Big Three between them have built across Europe.

Politics in Bavaria

General Eisenhower, if not the State Department, is evidently uneasy at the extent to which "efficiency" in his Zone has meant reliance by Military Government on Germans of administrative ability but politically dubious antecedents. General Patton's indiscretion was in putting his practice into principles: he announced as his policy in Bavaria what has been the unpublicised method of Military Government throughout the American Zone. This proved his undoing. He has been transferred to the command of the non-existent XV Army, and his successor has been quick to recognise a new Bavarian Cabinet under the Socialist Dr. Hoegner. Henceforth, General Trustcott states, Military Government will exercise only indirect control, leaving executive responsibility to the Germans themselves. Dr. Hoegner is an honest and fearless man, but it remains to be seen whether he will really be permitted to carry through those Socialist measures in which he and his colleagues believe, or whether, as is far more likely, he will be forced to take responsibility for the sort of "liberation" which Americans seem to believe is the only alternative to Communism. If this happens, he will soon be as discredited in the eyes of his own countrymen as the German Communists are in the Russian zone. Bavaria is a test-case which will show whether a Western Power will be any more successful than the Russians in avoiding the creation of puppet administrations under the guise of encouraging German "self-help."

Rival Claims in Indonesia

The area of fighting has been extended in Indonesia and more British and Gurkha troops have reached Java. As the statement issued on Thursday by sixty Labour Members of Parliament shows, this country is becoming increasingly uneasy at the extent to which we are being involved in military operations calculated to restore the Dutch Empire in Indonesia. Mr. Attlee's statement last week and a later statement issued from Admiral Mountbatten's Headquarters that order cannot be maintained in Java and Sumatra "without Indonesian co-operation" suggest an understanding of the need for discussion with the leaders of Dr. Soekarno's Republican Government. But this must be reinforced by stronger pressure on the Dutch Government and a refusal to sacrifice British and Indian lives to reimpose their rule. "Your attitude," Dr. Soekarno wrote in a letter to Sir Philip Christison, Allied Commander, "is far from neutral. It is decidedly pro-Dutch." The Indonesian Vice-President, Dr. Hatta, has suggested that his Cabinet would be content for the whole issue to be referred to a court set up by the United Nations, and that they would accept the decision provided Indonesia was represented on it. His five-point programme suggests a way out of the present crisis. He asks that no more Dutch troops be landed; that all Dutch troops leave the country; the Dutch Civil Administration remain quiescent; that the present Republican Administration be recognised until the question is reviewed by a competent World authority; and that the Allied army of occupation should henceforth confine itself to its proclaimed objectives regarding war prisoners and internees and the disarming of the Japanese. The Dutch Government has sent out five Indonesian lawyers from Holland to establish contact with leaders in Batavia, and Mr. Denning, British political adviser to Admiral Mountbatten, has met Dr. Soekarno. Both Professor Logemann, Overseas Territories Minister, and Dr. van Kleffens, Foreign Minister, have complained that they are not getting all the British help they considered their right in the restoration of their Empire, and revealed their concern that the British were pressing them to negotiate with the Soekarno Cabinet. The Left press in Holland and several Members in the Dutch Second Chamber in a debate on Java have urged support for the Soekarno Government. The crisis deepens as more troops arrive and as the Dutch prepare to train released prisoners of war. There are only two alternatives; one is to negotiate with the Soekarno Government and the other is the beginning of a war against the Indonesian people.

Peron's Counter Revolution

After a fortnight of turmoil and rioting, Colonel Peron and his supporters are more firmly in the saddle than they were before part of the Argentine Army endeavoured to unseat them. In last week's events, Peron's men—with the active assistance of the police—outmanoeuvred the confused and disunited opposition. Not only has Peron's demagogy secured him considerable popular backing, but his opponents ranged from military rivals to Conservative landowners and Communists, who have no common programme beyond their mutual dislike of the Argentine *Caudillo*. No real alternative leader appeared. For General Avalos confined himself to vague pronouncements about the restoration of constitutional rights and was known to be engaged in a tussle about the future conduct of the putsch with other military and civil opponents of Peron. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that Peron—who is one of the smartest politicians in Latin America—was able to present himself as a martyr to sinister intrigue and direct his followers in a series of impressive demonstrations. It is possible, indeed, that he could have recovered his position much sooner than he did, and that he was prepared to let things drift for a few days to make his come-back the more impressive and, outwardly, a response to popular demands. Since he no longer holds an official post—though the new Cabinet is packed with his henchmen—he is free to run as Presidential candidate in the elections which are now promised for April. It remains to be seen how much substance there is in the decree permitting the organisation of free political parties for the first time since the original putsch of July, 1943. For the time being, Peron may feel strong enough to permit a democratic façade—which might alleviate foreign and internal pressure—since, with the strings of power still in his hands, he will be able to make all the running. But, until a real democratic opposition emerges, it would be foolish to accept the façade for reality.

What Policy in Greece?

The insistence of the Regent that Monarchists must be included in any new Greek Government—and their refusal to work with Left or Centre groups—wrecked the successive attempts of Sophoulis, Tsouderos and Demotracopoulos to form a political administration to succeed that of Admiral Voulgaris. The Regent then took it upon himself to form a a stop-gap Cabinet. But in appearance this does not differ greatly from the "non-political" Voulgaris Cabinet, which was manifestly unable either to curb Monarchist intrigues and excesses or effect any improvement in political or economic conditions. Correspondents returning from Greece reiterate that the amnesty has been largely circumvented and that White terrorism continues. Now, in last week's debate in the House of Commons, there were signs that the Foreign Office has begun to realise that democracy cannot be restored in Greece merely by instructing British troops and officials to support the Regent's authority and avoid further entanglement in Greek politics. But Mr. Churchill's policy is still yielding bitter fruits. For better or worse, whilst British units remain in Greece, responsibility for events cannot be diverted merely by repeating the slogan of "Non-Intervention." A passive policy under present conditions, in fact, means that the Right continues to dominate Greece with British backing.

Atomic Politics

Of the British scientists concerned in producing the atomic bomb, Professor M. L. E. Oliphant is, we believe, alone in publicly denouncing the American Government's policy of secrecy as absurd in itself and as dangerous in that it increases international suspicion. But he revealed at an important meeting called by New Commonwealth on Wednesday night that the scientists who had been responsible for producing the bomb in the United States had unanimously voted against its use unannounced against the Japanese. Not that to drop twenty thousand tons in one raid is worse than twenty raids that each drop a thousand tons, but that the occasion could have been used to demonstrate to the Japanese (who might have surrendered before it was dropped) and to the world as a whole that Science had at last brought us to the stage when a World State is absolutely necessary for the survival of civilised man. As Professor Oliphant made it clear that in a few years every industrial country will be able to make atomic bombs, and that the knowledge of how to make them is inseparably connected with the use of atomic energy for industrial purposes, it is clear that the World Organisation must be not a mere loose federation of States, but a governmental body with an active international police force. All our political thinking and traditional statecraft has become archaic. Instead of quarrelling about the technicalities of the Potsdam agreement and the details of elections in the Balkans, the Great Powers should at once meet and discuss this new situation in the mood of men who understand that a new age has arrived, and that a new set of problems confronts them.

PARLIAMENT: A Socialist Chancellor

When Ernest Bevin was moved to the Foreign Office last August, there were doubters who whispered that Hugh Dalton was not tough enough to deal with the Treasury. In his one statement before the recess, his booming had seemed to cover up a certain hesitancy. But from the moment last Tuesday when he very deliberately unlocked his despatch box and hinged his vast frame comfortably over it, we felt that he was master not only of the Treasury, but of the House—not only of the House, but of his own backbenchers. With an astonishing dexterity, he contrived to make a Budget Speech which every working-class elector would recognise as straight Socialism, but which was also a bid for the support of the well-to-do professional classes. His opening passage set the tone. Here was a Chancellor who defined prosperity not in terms of dividends but by the price of foodstuffs. All through his speech one was aware of the complete contrast between the lucidity and humour of the Socialist Chancellor and the pontifical platitudes which Sir John Anderson would have given us. What is more, unlike Philip Snowden, Hugh Dalton has made his financial policy an integral part of the Government's general scheme of Socialisation. This Budget is the foundation of a five-year plan. The presentation was as good as the content. For over an hour we stretched out our mulish necks towards the promised carrot of tax reduction and were driven relentlessly along the road of Socialist finance. And when the carrot was finally dropped into our mouths, it had attached to it the increase of surtax which distinctly sharpened its flavour. "Damn it all," said a distinguished Tory in the lobby afterwards, "he talks as though it were a crime to get more than £5,000 a year; and the trouble is that one can't say in public that it isn't."

How different was the atmosphere on Monday. Mr. George Isaacs was perfectly right in describing Mr. Churchill's speech as "mischievous." But the trouble was that he completely failed to answer it. He is a very popular member of the Party and of course an excellent administrator in the Ministry of Labour. But in the House his own best friends are as relieved as he is when he sits down. He so obviously dislikes the whole business of debate, and is longing to get back to what he considers the real job. This meant last Monday that we had to wait till nearly ten o'clock for an adequate answer to Mr. Churchill. John Strachey did extremely well, but a Junior Minister speaking for one Service Ministry can hardly reply for the Cabinet as a whole on a vital subject like demobilisation. Strachey had to admit that he was not able to answer some of the most important points raised in an unusually competent debate, in which once again it was made clear that the Labour back benches are crammed with Service men whose ability and parliamentary technique contrast most uncomfortably with some Ministerial spokesmen. Mr. Attlee may have to recognise this fact somewhat earlier than he anticipated last August.

Discussions on the Old Age Pension issue have now been removed from the floor of the House to the secrecy of the Parliamentary party. No one wants to embarrass the Government, and it is hoped that some way can be found by which the aged can be helped very soon without legislation, and so without making the Government lose face. Paradoxically enough, Hugh Dalton has enormously strengthened the case of the 161 Labour members whose names still stand on the motion. His Budget, as back benchers were quick to note, brings relief to practically every worker active in industry or agriculture. It brings no relief to the very old and the very poor. As things stood last week they must wait till some time in 1947 before a Labour Government is ready to come to their assistance. Here is an opportunity for Herbert Morrison to regain the esteem which he risked so unnecessarily last week, by forcing Party discipline down our throats as though he regarded Dr. Squeers as the model for a Leader of the House. PHINEAS.

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A WAGE POLICY

The dockers have shown themselves very persistent, despite the absence of strike pay and the admonitions of Mr. Isaacs. Week-end meetings may result in a decision to call off the strike; but first reactions to the appeal by the Union's delegate conference to return to work "pending negotiations" were unfavourable. This is enough by itself to attest the reality of their grievance; for jumpiness at the end of a number of years of very strenuous work, though it might suffice to explain a strike, does not explain its duration. The root of the trouble, of course, is that the men have experienced a sharp fall of earnings without any change of job, or any noticeable change in the conditions under which their work is being done. This experience of sharply decreasing pay packets is coming upon a good many other workers besides the dockers; but in most other cases it has been accompanied by a change of occupation or at least by a notable alteration in the conditions of work. It is galling in such cases too, but more galling when the conditions remain essentially the same. The question raised by it, however, has to be faced, not for the dockers only, but for industry as a whole. There must be a wage-policy now, however difficult the Government and the trade unions may find it to declare one. The workers are as well alive as anyone else to the economic thesis that the size of the national income depends on the size of the national expenditure and that wages constitute a highly important part of the make-up of demand. They see falling wages as threatening either a diversion of income to other groups or—what is even worse—a fall in national income with unemployment as its accompaniment. Against this it may be argued that, in view of the shortage of consumers' goods, the danger is of an excess, rather than a deficiency, of purchasing power. But the workers will naturally answer that, if there is need for economy, the burden should not be laid on them in the form of reduced earnings—at any rate so long as they continue to show themselves as ready as they have done hitherto to contribute towards the national savings.

Here, of course, lies the crux of the matter. If wages are reduced, as they may be to a great extent by the withdrawal of special war allowances, the reduction of overtime, and the shift back from better to worse paid trades, the resultant effect will be to alter the distribution of the national income to the workers' disadvantage, if not to reduce its total. But earnings can be maintained, and the demands of the demobilised soldiers met, only if savings can be kept at a very high level—unless (contrary to the policy evidently favoured by Mr. Dalton) prices are allowed to rise sharply, so as to destroy the real value of the money earnings. This is the difficult equation which the Government has somehow to solve; and it clearly cannot be solved by the ordinary methods of collective bargaining *plus* arbitration separately on the supposed merits of each case. It requires a general decision about the level at which post-war earnings are to be set, and about the price-level *as a whole, and not merely of "pegged" basic foods,* that is to correspond to them—and therewith about the sums which must be taken away from spending by taxation or by saving in order to make it possible to hold the related wage and price levels in due balance. This is obviously a very difficult algebraical calculation; and we do not envy Mr. Dalton and his fellow-Ministers their shares in working it out. They must, however, not only work it out and apply it, but also succeed in making the gist of it intelligible, not merely to trade union leaders, but to the potential leaders of unofficial strikes as well. Unless they do, the official trade union leaders will be quite unable to restrain their followers, to whom it will appear that there is a conspiracy, involving these leaders as well as the employers, to push the workers back into poverty and insecurity, while allowing the employers to make the most of a sellers' market.

This danger is illustrated by the surrounding circumstances of the present stoppage. The official claim of the Transport and General Workers' Union is for a minimum wage of 25*s.* a day, a basic working week of 40 hours, and a number of other concessions. The reasonableness of these claims cannot possibly be settled for one industry alone. The right wage depends on the price level, and the right number of hours depends on a calculation of how hard we shall all need to work during the next few years much more than on anything peculiar to dock labour. Yet the Union put forward these demands, which were pressed on it by the dockers' delegates, in a purely sectional form—as indeed it had to do in the absence of any general policy laid down by either the T.U.C. or the Government. As against the demands, the employers' offer, even if they had been willing to continue discussing it during the stoppage, was not of a sort to arouse any enthusiasm. A guarantee of £16 over four weeks, including all overtime and allowances, is a very different thing from a basic wage of 25*s.* a day; and there was certain to be the strongest objection to this averaging over four weeks and taking all supplementary earnings into account. No doubt there would be something in the offer if we were on the eve of a new period of endemic unemployment; but if, as we have been promised, full employment is to be the order of the future, there is very little indeed in a guarantee of this *monthly* sort, though there is a good deal, in view of the necessary uncertainties of dock labour, in a *weekly* guaranteed wage.

The employers' offer, then, was quite uncalculated to influence the men's mood. But it is not easy to see how the employers could be expected to make a satisfactory offer without some guidance from the Government on the general issues of policy involved. In our view, there is not much doubt about the kind of guidance the Government ought to be ready to give.

First, we believe it to be necessary, if the Government is to retain the workers' confidence, for it to give support to maintenance of the general level of earnings, as distinct from the exceptionally high earnings which have accrued to a few. In January of this year, according to the Ministry of Labour's figures, average earnings over a wide range of trades were 76 per cent. above the level of October 1938—the official datum line. The rise was 73 per cent. for men, 94 per cent. for women, 69 per cent. for youths and boys, and 82 per cent. for girls. The average working week for men was 49½ hours, as against 47¾ in 1938; but boys, women and girls were working fewer hours than before the war. In money terms, the men's average was 119*s.* 3*d.*, the women's 63*s.* 2*d.* We think average earnings somewhere near these levels should be taken as the basis for wage-policy, with the proviso that the prices of uncontrolled articles, outside the scope of Mr. Dalton's subsidy "pegging," must be deflated. Otherwise average earnings may have to rise by a greater percentage than the figures suggest.

It would then remain, of course, to translate the general average into actual wage-rates for the various types of work—not an easy matter, but one that could be tackled by collective bargaining and arbitration much more hopefully that it can be to-day. As for the 40-hour week, we think the Government should say frankly that the country cannot afford it, as a general standard, and should declare in favour of a standard week of not more than 44 hours during the years of reconstruction. There is the outline of a wage-policy. If it is not the right one, will the Government, after any consultations it pleases with the T.U.C. and the employers, say what is right? For assuredly *some* plain policy there must be, if there are not to be many more strikes like the dockers', and a serious risk of the collapse of the whole system of industrial negotiation.

THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

In one respect the verdict of the French elections is clear: by an overwhelming majority the electorate has pronounced against the restoration of the Third Republic. The sovereignty of the new Chamber will, indeed, have the limitations for which General de Gaulle asked; that is, until fresh elections are held, the Government can be removed from office only by a formal vote of censure moved after due notice, and the new Constitution which is to be framed will not come into force until it has been approved by a further referendum. Nevertheless the Chamber will be definitely a Constituent Assembly.

But if the popular will has been voiced unequivocally on the constitutional issue, it is less easy to discern clarity in its expression when we come to consider the composition of the Assembly which has been elected. There has been, it is true, a simplification of parties. On the Right wing of the old Popular Front, the Socialist-Radicals—evidently associated in the public mind with the Third Republic's final decadence—have been virtually wiped out; and the four groups of the extreme Right have been reduced to small splinter fractions, holding between them less than 80 seats. The new Chamber will be dominated by three large parties—Communists, Socialists and Catholic Left (*Mouvement Républicain Populaire*), each of whose numbers—taking into account various Resistance groups affiliated to the Communist and Socialist parties—are practically equal. Thus, on the face of it, France's neighbours might be led to conclude that she is moving towards a reasonably clear-cut Three Party system, with the balance of power unmistakably Left of Centre.

Confusion, however, is imported into this picture by a number of factors. First and foremost, the French elector, unlike his opposite number in Britain, was not presented with a choice between readily distinguishable, Conservative and Progressive, social and economic policies. The three main Parties all subscribe to the Resistance programme for *épuration* and the nationalisation of large sectors of French industry and finance; and to no party can voters be said to have given an unmistakable mandate such as that accorded to Mr. Attlee's administration. Secondly, there is a big unknown quantity in the eventual direction which will be taken by M.R.P., with its novel combination of Pétainist Clericalism and the pioneering Reformist *mystique* of the Resistance. Finally, there is the complication that the Socialists, disappointed of their hopes of emerging as the largest single party, are electorally as much at enmity with their Communist rivals for working-class leadership as they are traditionally antagonistic to a Catholic Centre whose allegiance to de Gaulle is indisputable, but whose sincerity in demanding radical reforms has yet to be tested.

Obviously the new Government, during the Assembly's seven months' life, will have to be based on some sort of coalition; but will it be a coalition between Socialists and Communists—a combination which would command over 50 per cent. of the seats, even if the Socialist-Radicals declined to join a recreated *Front Populaire?* Or will it be a coalition, in defiance of traditional religious alignments, between the Socialists and M.R.P.? The one certain thing at the moment is that the immediate initiative lies with General de Gaulle. He can claim, with justification, that the referendum result amounted in effect to a vote of confidence in his favour; and he will doubtless argue that, with the existing balance of parties in the Chamber, he is more than ever "necessary" as a focus of national unity.

The question is how he will interpret, in these circumstances, national—not forgetting his own personal—interests. He may endeavour to form a broadly-based Coalition Government representing all the three big parties, if a formula for temporary collaboration can be devised between their leaderships. If he fails, he will be most disinclined to exclude from office his own devoted adherents in M.R.P. So he may endeavour to manœuvre the Communists into isolation as the rigid pro-Russian opponents of a "national" Left-Centre *bloc* committed to the General's version of Western Union. Or again, having formed a Government by selection of personalities, he may seek to split all three parties by presenting issues, either in foreign or domestic policy, which create the maximum internal party fissures. The General's responsibility is now immense, and the temptation which may beset him, to strengthen his own hand by embroiling the parties with one another, and by fostering splits between leaders and rank and file, is pregnant with dangers for the stability of the Fourth Republic and the reputation of democracy in Europe.

A PLAN FOR PALESTINE

Small though Palestine is, it confronts us with one of the most difficult tangles that the Labour Government has to unravel. The problem is difficult not merely because it touches anxious questions of strategy and rivalries over oil: it finds us in a state of some emotional confusion. In the background of the mind of the older generation, brought up on the Bible, is the traditional assumption that this Land of Promise belongs by divine decree to the Jews. Of its long history since their dispersal few of us know much. Public opinion rallied to the idea of the National Home because most of us suffered from a sense of shame as we reviewed the record of our ancestors in their dealings with this persecuted people. The wish to make amends to them has been reinforced by the Nazi policy of extermination. But a contrary sense of discomfort, if not of guilt, besets us as we listen to the protests of the Arabs. The Zionist experiment, on the economic side, has been brilliantly successful, and it has raised the standard of life of the Arab population. But the two peoples are as far as ever from reconciliation: we rule them by force and no prospect of democratic self-government is in sight. We are uneasily aware that the motives behind the Balfour Declaration were mixed—in part humanitarian, in part strategic—while the promises made to the Arabs may possibly be in conflict with it. Then was the whole policy ethically and politically wrong, because it ignored the "natural right" of the Arabs to self-determination?

This issue we must decide before we can frame a policy. Does the continuous occupation of a territory, covering in this case thirteen centuries, confer on its inhabitants a "natural right" to monopolise it? If in this long stretch of time the people in question has misused its opportunities; if a prosperous focus of civilisation has degenerated under its management into a stagnant backwater of depression; if its land can nourish in poverty only one family where once five lived in plenty, can it still claim the exclusive rights of ownership? That was the case of Palestine and indeed of other regions of the Middle East; how it happened, as the invading nomads neglected the ancient systems of irrigation, the historians and archæologists can tell us.

In the past, with a total lack of scruple, notably in North America and Australia, white colonists answered such questions for themselves, as their interests dictated. What happened a quarter of a century ago was that there came into existence in the League of Nations a tribunal which could claim to give in such a case a disinterested verdict. It saw that this neglected territory was capable of a better use, and it believed that the Jews, because of their dire need of a home and their love for this land that once was theirs, were fit for the creative task of restoring its prosperity. In principle this was a proper decision, which the League was competent to give. But the League's Mandate, sound though it was in principle, settled none of the questions that vex us to-day.

The ultimate question is whether the Jewish National Home is to be stabilised at its present level with some 600,000 inmates, and further immigration virtually forbidden in terms of the White Paper of 1939. Ignoring for a moment the anxious political issues, let us look first at the technical possibilities of development. Much as the Jewish colonists have done, there is now before us a bolder scheme, drafted by engineers who gained their experience under the Tennessee Valley Authority. It promises an ample supply both of hydro-electricity and water for irrigation. It would apply all the classical American methods for dealing with soil erosion and render southern Palestine (the Negeb), now a desert, habitable. Assuming a big expansion of light industries, its authors reckon that it should eventually allow an addition of four millions to the present population. It should benefit the Arabs no less than the Jews, and Transjordan should profit as well as Palestine. With this prospect before us, to arrest the development of the country at its present stage would be a crime against life itself. The first clue to a happy solution is to create a Jordan Valley Authority, and endow it with full powers to develop Palestine for the benefit of Arabs and Jews alike.

Does this mean that the Arab population must be swamped by Jewish immigration? That cannot happen. Himmler's massacre has reduced the Jewish population of Europe (excluding Russia) to 1½ millions. The Western Jews will either stay where they are or emigrate to America. It is the remnant of the tortured Jews of Germany, Poland, Hungary and Rumania who look to Palestine as a refuge from a hostile environment and maddening memories. About 60,000 of these are still in camps behind barbed wire; many more have lost their means of livelihood. The urgent cases may number about 100,000. Further immigration beyond that figure would have to be spaced over the years. The total cannot greatly exceed half a million. That would bring the Jewish and Arab populations of Palestine in round figures to a parity—though it would be a mistake to fix any unalterable ratio in advance.

What chances are there that under these conditions the two peoples could live together in harmony? The difficulty is formidable. They share neither culture nor language. In their outlook, as in their standard of life, they are centuries apart. The conservative Arab dreads the restless energy of the progressive Jew. Neither would submit as a minority to the government of the other. Given parity, would they not frustrate one another in a perpetual stalemate? Across a national antagonism so acute as this, it is never easy to form parties drawn from both races. These are the conditions that have led many students of this problem to propose partition as the only tolerable solution. No one likes the idea. The country is too small to be cut into three zones, nor can clean-cut lines be drawn. There is, moreover, a risk that any demarcation based on racial considerations would render the scheme of a Jordan Valley Authority technically unworkable.

There may be another way out which has received little consideration as yet. Instead of territorial partition, could we devise a system of communal autonomy? Something of the kind, in a crude, old-world shape, existed in the former Ottoman Empire. Each religious community, known as a *Millet*, enjoyed cultural autonomy in a wide sense. Every Christian bishop, with a lay council, managed the schools of the Church and the charities that were, in effect, its social services. The Jews are already in great measure autonomous in this sense, for they manage their own schools and their admirable health service, while through the Jewish Agency, the trade unions and the co-operatives they enjoy effective democratic control over most of their economic activities. To give this existing autonomous system full legal recognition would in the case of the Jews be easy.

In the case of the Arabs the feudal structure of their society is an obstacle. Their communal life is much less active and enterprising. Such progress as they have made in education, hygiene and agricultural technique they owe not to their own initiative, but to the British administration.

Before they can become in any vital sense a self-governing democracy, the shocking system of land-tenure will have to be reformed. Tenants at will, under owners who often double the part of landlord and usurer, the mass of the peasantry can neither be prosperous nor free until the big feudal estates are broken up by a compulsory measure of land-purchase. Until this is done, there will be no living Arab democracy. With some help from British officials in the early years, it should then be possible to organise for the Arabs also a system of communal autonomy, under an elected council of their own.

The two communities would in this way manage their own intimate affairs without the domination of one by the other. Neither council would remain for long a solid national block; groups would be formed within each. The next step would be to bring the two councils together, on a footing of parity, for the management of the common affairs of the whole population. At first this bi-national council could only be consultative, and would have to include some nominated members as a balancing factor. A sense of common interests might gradually link some of the groups together for co-operation across the racial barrier. This would happen only if the more contentious issues—immigration and land-settlement—were kept (subject to consultation) in its own hands by the Trustee Power. The volume of immigration should depend solely on the economic absorptive capacity of the country, which in its turn would be governed largely by the progress of the Jordan Valley Authority's schemes. This Authority, whose director might be nominated by the President of the U.S.A., should be required by its charter to serve the interests not only of the Jewish settlers but of the Arab peasantry also. What has been lacking in the past has been creative planning on its behalf.

In due course, if Palestine evolved happily into a bi-national state, capable of self-government, it might federate with Syria, the Lebanon and Transjordan. In this bigger field the Arabs would find full scope for their patriotic ambitions. The chances of peace would be brighter, if through the International Bank American capital could be guided to assist in the development of these neighbouring Arab States on the T.V.A. model. If they could be helped to conserve their own natural resources, they might come to feel less bitterness as they watched the progress of the Jewish National Home.

This could not be an easy conception to realise, but it has advantages over territorial partition, which may be the second-best solution. The one course which should be ruled out, since it conflicts both with the explicit pledges of the Labour Party and with the terms of the Mandate, would be the acceptance of the White Paper as a final solution. We owe it to Hitler's victims to find them a refuge. This can be done without injury to the Arabs, if we give the engineers their chance.

H. N. Brailsford

A LONDON DIARY

I spoke this week to a large university audience which, of course, included many who had been recently demobilised. The Society which I addressed devotes itself seriously to the study of international affairs, and wanted not political pep, but an exposition of the world situation. Inevitably the picture is gloomy, and I tried to relieve the gloom by concentrating on the chances of using the atomic bomb as a lever for world organisation, and making suggestions about the best way of overcoming the difficulties between Russia and the West, and on the problem of creating a "closer union" in Western Europe of a type which would be no menace to any other State. Afterwards I was assailed by an American officer, who said that, if my picture were true, all the Service men had been through hell for nothing; that we had just defeated Fascism and there was enough scepticism and cynicism about the future without my adding to it. An English ex-officer explained that the Service men just would not "take" all the "realism" that had been pumped into them in army lectures; they demanded some positive assurance and lead for the future. The criticism touched me very closely. Thinking it over afterwards, I see that the real point is not that I was unconstructive or over-gloomy, but that to tell people that certain things must be done on the high diplomatic level, which they distrust anyway, gives them no personal hope or objective. In every returning soldier, as Priestley points out in his admirable *Letter to a Returning Service Man* (Home & Van Thal, 3*s.* 6*d.*), there are two tendencies—the glowing reformer and revolutionary, and the escapist, who got the upper hand after the last war until he was jerked out of his private garden by the discovery that the world had been plunging to catastrophe while he tried not to look. Labour leaders must not forget while they are in office that the idealistic tide will flow into wrong channels unless individual supporters are made to feel their personal part in creating a new world order and reconstructing their country.

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This journal has received several outraged letters about the Belsen trial, one quoting especially the description by defence counsel of the inmates as "scum of the ghetto." Major Winwood has also been attacked in the Russian press for his "pro-Fascist" attitude. These heart-felt protests raise the whole problem of the trials of war-criminals. Two alternatives are open. You can adopt the Russian method, and turn them into political demonstrations. By choosing this course, you placate public opinion; but you also bring our Western concept of justice into contempt, by denying to the defence the rights to which it is entitled. On the other hand, you can decide to conduct the proceedings exactly like any ordinary criminal trial. Counsel must then plead his client's case as persuasively as possible. If his client is a Nazi, then he must make the Nazi case, however false and nauseating. The same difficulty will crop up at Nuremberg, if Ribbentrop's lawyer, for instance, uses in defence the argument that saving Europe from Bolshevism justified Hitler's acts of aggression.

* * *

The Jew is always the scapegoat, and in Hampstead an organised group of Tory women is blaming him for the housing shortage. For some curious historical reason the refugee population, to the number of about 19,000, is largely concentrated in this district. The petition, which proposes that all aliens in the Hampstead Burgh shall be forcibly repatriated, touches the depths of political illiteracy, but it has received, none the less, the support of the Member, Mr. Challen, the Mayor and two thousand signatories. Its authors suggest that if the aliens cannot be shipped away at once, they should be interned. Happily, the thinking part of the community has taken up the challenge. The local Labour Party has issued a strongly worded counter-statement, and a crowded meeting of protest was held on Monday in the hall of Holy Trinity church, with a big overflow gathering outside. The speakers, Miss Rathbone and the Vicar among them, pointed out that of the 55,000 German and Austrian refugees in the whole country, not more than 40,000 will wish to remain permanently; that comes to less than one per thousand of our population. Official records show that 88 per cent. of the adults were engaged in work of national importance and 7,000 of them served in the Forces, all of them volunteers. The record of their scientists in research and of their industrialists in setting up new factories in depressed areas made, needless to say, an impressive case. But the speakers who appealed plainly for humanity made the strongest impression on a very mixed gathering. To me the high point of the meeting came in the discussion at the end, when a woman who had signed the petition declared that she had been converted to the contrary opinion by what she had heard. I came away satisfied that there are forces in this country which will make a fight of it before we adopt the policies of the enemy we have beaten. British residents in Hampstead should apply to Mr. Ivor Murray, 36 Yale Court, Honeybourne Road, N.W.6, for forms of a counter-petition.

* * *

The idea of returning to the galley method of using muscle-power instead of mechanical energy may seem unattractive, but the more I learn of conditions in Germany and elsewhere, the more I am persuaded that Geoffrey Pyke may be right. In carefully argued articles in the *Economist* and *Manchester Guardian* he put the case for "Cyclotractors." These are multiple-cycle vehicles, pedalled by rows of men, 20 or 30 mounted together, capable of drawing railway, or road, waggons with a greater thermodynamic efficiency than a locomotive. For example, he points out that a pound (3.350 calories) of that rare commodity coal fed to a locomotive, which converts it into power with an efficiency of only 5.5 per cent., represents a return of only 173 calories of output work. Shocking to be talking of stoking men as though they were simply engines? Yes, but we *are* feeding the Ruhr miners on that principle and we *are* measuring out calories to the rest of the population on the basis of keeping the engine "ticking-over" this winter. And the British authorities have just commandeered 25,000 bicycles to give them to the Ruhr miners, so that the caloric-energy they save by pedalling instead of walking can be expended on hewing. Already the Germans are a nation of human-tractors, without the benefit or the efficiency of Pyke's bicycle mechanism. Englishmen just back from Germany describe them now, hauling faggots along the roads from the woods; dragging "land-rafts," sledges laden with goods, along the autobahn, and, miles from anywhere, pushing everything from perambulators to warehouse trolleys. (Even in this country we were reduced to similar primitive measures last winter when we had to collect our own coal from the dealers.) The Germans are a cycling nation and there are a lot of Hitler Youth and others unemployed. Given the incentive of extra rations (calories for the engine) and of doing something to help themselves, the "cyclotractor" would appeal to them. After all, is a squad of men pedalling bicycles any more absurd than a squad of navvies wielding picks and shovels in the age of the mechanical digger and the bulldozer?

* * *

The cutting-down of our war-time machinery of propaganda may be right and inevitable. But do we want to carry it so far that we isolate ourselves from friendly nations? A letter from Algiers conveys a warning that small economies in the running of our consular service are having this effect. The writer is a journalist who contributes to several newspapers of this colony. So long as the French Provisional Government was there, he had access to an ample official British press service. When that closed down, the British Consul opened a reading-room for accredited journalists. It received by air-mail the *Times*, *Economist*, New Statesman and several other English periodicals. From these he could get the background for the interpretation of the day's news. Now this convenience, which he and other journalists valued highly, was coming to an end. The Americans were wiser: a similar reading-room in their consulate was still open.

* * *

Just as the train started three R.A.F. officers, one a woman, and an A.T.S. officer, squashed into the unoccupied three seats. Someone noticed it was a non-smoking compartment. Did I mind? No. But the elderly lady sitting in the opposite corner, reading a book, said that she did mind; she had carefully chosen one of the few non-smoking compartments. The R.A.F. contingent put away their cigarettes and out of a large suitcase produced several bottles of liquor. Was there any objection to drinking? I said I had not heard that this was a non-drinking compartment; the railway companies might consider the point. The journey then became very matey—rather too matey. Only the elderly lady in the corner refused the glasses of whisky that were passed round. One of the R.A.F. officers, who was merry without being gay, wanted to find out what was inside my brief-case. For once, it so happened that it *did* contain private papers, and the job of guarding them in a friendly, firm and tactful manner was not too easy. At one stage the inquisitive officer disappeared—out of the window. He opened the window on the track side, and climbed out of it, leaving only the toes of his shoes on the window-sill. We were travelling fast, and when he had hung on to the roof of the train with his body outside for some time, it seemed doubtful if he would be able to climb back into the carriage. He was helped back by his friend. The elderly lady displayed no particular concern. I asked whether he often performed this dangerous and difficult feat, and I gathered that he felt that a railway journey had not been sufficiently exciting unless he had run this particular risk. His companions were bothered about tunnels. I was reminded of a rather similar incident in the first volume of *War and Peace*. But there the man on the window-sill had to gulp down a whole bottle of liquor. If it had been possible for us to pass a bottle of whisky to our R.A.F. friend I'm sure he would have drained it while clinging to the roof of the moving train. Unlike Tolstoy's hero, he would have done it for devilment without the additional attraction of a bet. The incident added further point to a question asked me not long ago by a senior officer in the R.A.F. What, he asked, were all these young airmen, with their highly specialised training, their terrific sense of adventure and their complete lack of earning power, going to do in post-war England?

* * *

Some weeks ago I remarked that I wanted to edit an anthology of prayers, forgetting for the moment that the job had already been beautifully done last Christmas by Allan Laing (*Prayers and Graces*, illustrated by Mervyn Peake, published by Gollancz). A contributor has kindly sent me another historical prayer which could well be added to a future edition of Mr. Laing's anthology. It was offered in the University of Oxford during the reign of Charles I.

> Wee desire the Corant-makers to be inspired with the Spirit of truth, that one may know when to praise Thy blessed and glorious name and when to pray unto Thee; for we often praise and Laude Thy Holy Name for the King of Sweden's victories and afterwards we heare that there is noe such thing, and we oftentime pray unto Thee to relieve the same King in his distresses, and we Likewise heare that there is noe such Cause.

CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to Miss H. B. Preedy.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

Lost, two ferrets from public baths, Barton Street, Gloucester. Reward.—Advt. in *Gloucester Citizen.*

Variety. Shoot the War Criminals at El Dorado, 15 Lombard Street. The home of clean fun.—Advt. *Belfast Telegraph.*

Available end Nov. Fur. Flat. Highest refs. reqd. Gentiles only. No foreigners, Southern Irish or pets. Suit pre-war naval officer's family or equivalent.—Advt. *Dalton's Weekly.*

People whose business it is to keep an eye on these things have observed that the King has now resumed wearing a bowler hat.—*Evening News.*

What about those ugly pylons—put up in the oddest places. Could they not be camouflaged to represent pine trees? They would then harmonise with the landscape.—Letter in *Sunday Dispatch.*

NEW LIFE IN POLAND

WHEN it became known that I was going to revisit Poland, which I had not seen since 1933, I had my fill of warnings and gloomy prophecies. "You will only be allowed to see just what the Russian overlords wish you to see," said one. "You will be given lots of good food and drink," said another, "and it will be concealed from you (in so far as it is possible) that thousands of people are starving just round the corner." There were even those who foretold that what with tyranny, fear of secret police, and enormous devastation, the trip would be an entirely tragic and sombre experience.

How wrong those suggestions were! I do not propose to dwell upon the tragedies of destruction, although I believe that most of the many thousands of people who revel in the strains of the "Warsaw Concerto" do not know the extent of the ruins of the capital of Poland. The significant facts which met my eyes immediately on arrival were the immense courage and cheerfulness of the citizens of Warsaw, who are crowding back into their capital, making its shattered streets gay with a hundred flower stalls, operating a multifarious free market in nooks and crannies in the ruins and along the pavements of the side streets. "Where do those people live?" you may ask. A great proportion tramp daily across the temporary bridge over the Vistula from the poor quarter on the other side which the Germans had not time to destroy. The rest live in cellars and in patched-up rooms in gutted tenements with no glass and no drainage, climbing into them by ladders as often as not. The streets are crowded at all hours of the day with people who look full of purpose and eagerness, carrying window-frames and doors to mend their homes, while the Municipal authorities are issuing hot soup to workers in the city. One evening the trams started running again for the first time since the Germans left. They were decorated with garlands of evergreen and the people stopped in the streets to cheer them as they passed.

Of course the economic position is full of anomalies. I asked the civil servant who was walking with me whether it was worth people's while sitting like that with a tray of second-hand goods in the kerb market. "Certainly," he replied, "that old lady there—and indeed the majority of those taking part in retailing—make a good deal more than I do, more than the teachers, and even more than the unskilled workers. And the owners of the peasant carts which are doing service as buses (used by workers and middle-class alike) are doing very well also."

Food is not acutely short. When a cart of potatoes was upset in a main street there was little attempt to gather up the remnants. Basic foodstuffs are carefully rationed, and food and drink are issued as part of the remuneration of workers. Nevertheless, the shop windows show tremendously high prices for everything except essential simple food, and I gathered that good employers such as the Polish film and radio people provided supplementary rations for their employees. The most important fact of all is that the prices of essential commodities are coming steadily down and that the graver anomalies in wages are being dealt with.

What about the Russians? Was I allowed to see anything I wanted to see? The answer to the second question was undoubtedly in the affirmative. I was not restricted to an official interpreter and I went everywhere I wanted, listening to accounts of the present administration, some of them critical but many of them appreciative, even from people who were out of sympathy with the Government politically. Through the interpreters I spoke to journalists, university lecturers, students, shopkeepers, and housewives. I did not meet many Communists and I did not get the impression that there were many to be met. Admittedly the present Government does not reflect the majority of the people in Poland. I did meet a wide variety of people—democrats, economists, socialists, and writers, of no particular party, who were taking a realistic attitude and co-operating with the present regime. As far as the Russians were concerned, I did see a fair number of soldiers, officers, and other ranks. I rode for about a hundred miles in a Red Army lorry when a car in which I was travelling broke down. Fortunately one of the occupants of my car spoke Russian. The two Red Army officers were cheery, happy-go-lucky fellows who seemed to have adopted a kindly and philosophic outlook on the problems facing them. It is true that there are still a number of undisciplined stragglers of the Red Army who have not yet been withdrawn from Poland, and who misbehave themselves after dark. These are mainly peasant soldiers of a low type such as exist in the armies of all countries.

There were some Russians collaborating with Poles in the new radio studios and transmitter, and the beginnings of the Polish film industry are deriving all possible encouragement from the same source. Let us make no mistake about it: traditionally Poles do not like Russians—because of "old unhappy far-off things and battles long ago." To-day they are still temperamentally unsympathetic to Russians and to Russian methods of government. Their peasants are far too individualistic to take to the collective farming system, and whereas they are appreciating owning their own land, I do not believe they are taking any great pleasure in the impoverishment of their landlords. They were quite obviously friendly with the Russians on the Red Army lorry when they spoke to them on the roadside.

One of the most heartening things was the clear evidence I saw that there is as yet no widespread attempt to suppress free discussion. At an early stage of my visit I met Nalkowska—the *grande dame* of Polish letters, whom I had met at the International PEN Congress in Edinburgh some thirteen years before. She looked hardly a day older and was still rather a terrifying person. I asked what had happened to her, and was told that she became a Communist and was provided with a flat in Lotz. Shortly after this she was *not* re-elected as President of the Polish Writers' Society and her place was taken by a man of liberal opinions. She still remains a Communist congresswoman but no attempt has been made to interfere with the new President. When a representative of the Ministry of Culture was telling me all about the imaginative plans of the new Government, which is giving considerable subsidies to the professional associations of writers, painters and musicians, a young writer who was sitting beside me interrupted, saying "All this will be of no use if there is ever going to be interference with the liberty of writers to write as they wish. Writers do not wish to be pensioners, but to be allowed to tell the truth." This did not sound like the utterance of a man living in the presence of a tyrannical secret police! I do not think that an attempt to institute such a system would ever be successful in Poland.

The main impression which I took away from Poland was of a country struggling back to normality with high courage and imaginative resourcefulness. I am afraid it is a country looking more and more away from England because it feels forgotten by her. Poland associates U.N.R.R.A. with America, and the restarting of its commerce and industry with Russia. Yet most of the people I spoke to, from the forest guard in the woods above Cracow to the venerable professor and museum curator, longed for a strengthening of the cultural ties with England and France. They will welcome the establishment of an institute by the British Council and they hope for an interchange of art and music. The greatest need of the country is the steady return of manpower to help in the task of reconstruction, the import of livestock to revive their agriculture, and the restoration of their transport services to make economic revival speedier and more effective.

DAVID CLEGHORN THOMSON

SOPHOCLEAN DISCOVERY

Nearly every one knows by this time that the latest additions to the Old Vic repertory programme are Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *The Critic*, in which Sheridan parodied so uproariously the eighteenth century's stilted and degenerate conception of poetic tragedy, and indulged in digs, not yet quite out of date, at those who make or mar theatrical reputations. Last week was the first time I had seen either of these plays, but half a century ago I nearly knew Act II of *The Critic* by heart, having, as the Earl of Leicester, scored in it my one and only success as an actor. How I envied Mr. Raghan the privilege of declaiming, with countenance ovinely meek, Leicester's spirit-stirring prayer to Mars ! Since then (I mean my own memorable performance), too many " Ophelias " have been a little spoilt for me by recalling Tilburina going mad in white satin and gathering invisible flowers, so that I have even expected some of them to utter any moment—and with a sententious simplicity too deep for tears—" an oyster may be crossed in love."

I surmise *The Critic* has been often well performed before, for although actors are a vain folk, yet they revel in taking themselves (or each other) off ; but I find it hard to fancy that the piece has ever been played with more gusto than it is at The New Theatre, or that there could be a more *thoughtful* Burleigh than Mr. Richardson. Nor can I imagine a Sir Fretful Plagiary more like a nervous porcupine than Mr. Miles Malleson, a more docile stage-struck Dangle than Mr. Relph's, or a more airy, impudent, rattle-tattle, irrepressible Puff than Mr. Laurence Olivier's. Yes, I am about to pay him a compliment which, if I understand the pride of an actor in versatility, will bring a slim smile of pleasure to his lips : I did not recognise him. And even when my neighbour told me who it was, for a minute or two I did *not* believe her ! The explanation was that fifteen minutes earlier he had identified himself for me, utterly and terribly, with one of the most massive parts in all tragic drama. And that raises a psychological query. Was it a mistake on the part of the Old Vic thus to combine in a single evening's entertainment parody with one of the most deeply disturbing, and for us, inevitably, one of the strangest, of the world's great plays ? From a box-office point of view, it was not ; nor from that of the actors themselves, and their performance ; for nothing refreshes and stimulates more the histrionic temperament than violent changes. But as regards the permanency of the impressions likely to have been left by their art upon the imagination of spectators—too apt, anyway, to be marble to receive, and wax to retain—it was probably a mistake. Quite possibly the result on their memories of following up *Oedipus* with *The Critic* has been analogous to pulling the tab of one of those ingenious memoranda pads, when everything previously noted upon it vanishes. And if so, what a waste ! As far as I was affected . . . well, I'm one-third actor, and I was wise enough to go twice. But I did feel rather like what I have felt when on issuing from an old friend's memorial service, someone has instantly asked me to a cocktail party.

Although the ancient Greeks were perhaps æsthetically and intellectually the most superior people that the earth has bred, and we need never be surprised at any play they reckoned a masterpiece possessing qualities which we admire in Shakespeare or Ibsen, yet any play written nearly twenty-four centuries ago, must, of course, contain emotional effects, once immediate and overwhelming, which are no longer so. Here scholars come to the rescue ; and though merely knowing how the Greeks felt about blood-pollution, oracles, curses divine or royal, can never be the same as feeling such things ourselves, some knowledge is important if we are to understand the dramatic motives and situations in their plays, and the finest efforts of our actors to interpret them are not to be half-wasted. And then there is the Greek conception of Fate, so overwhelming in this play.

Sophocles's *Oedipus* is a tragedy, exquisitely and firmly constructed out of a legendary story of the most appalling fall from power to helplessness, from honour to ignominy, in all dramatic literature. We cannot measure ourselves instinctively the depth and inevitability of that collapse as it appeared to an ancient Greek, but we can feel it through an instructed imagination and the passion with which actors interpret the story. Imagine what some young Italian who remembered Mussolini in his pre-war glory might feel as he looked upon that mauled and spat-at body in the market place of Milan. Something like that might be a parallel to the feelings inspired in a Greek when it was brought home to Oedipus, the saviour King of Thebes, that he had killed inadvertently his unknown father and married afterwards, unawares, his mother, and thus had also proved a curse to his own beloved people. The tragedy in this case, however, lies in the innocence of the victim. The legend of Oedipus was used by Sophocles to show dramatically the relation between gods and men, or, as Provost Sheppard says, between Man and what we now call circumstance.

> Sophocles neither attempts, like Æschylus, to justify the evil nor presumes, like Euripides, to deny its divine origin. That is because his gods—whether he believed in them, or exactly in what sense, does not matter—stand for the universe of circumstance as it is. Æschylus and Euripides both demand for their worship a god who is good and just. Both therefore must attempt to solve " the problem of evil." The pagan gods of Homer and Sophocles require no such reconciliation. They are great and good, and great and bad, like things, and men and nature. . . . He neither justifies the gods by making Oedipus a criminal nor condemns the gods because the agony of Oedipus is undeserved. He bids the audience face the facts.—(J. T. Sheppard, *Oedipus Tyrannus*.)

It was not, however, we may be sure, that grim moral which has made *Oedipus* the most often revived of all Greek plays—nor its pure and lofty poetry either. But its extraordinary dramatic merits. Seneca, Corneille, Dryden and Voltaire in turn all tried their hands at rewriting, embellishing and correcting it in accordance with the tastes, ideas and dramatic principles of their times. Such merits as they possess are chiefly due to their *sometimes* following Sophocles. Now, for the first time in English, the play itself has been performed in Yeats's fine natural prose, paraphrased and sometimes condensed (especially in the choruses) with the instinct of a poet dramatist, though Yeats himself did not know a word of Greek. The result is a grand and moving tragedy. The gradual unveiling of Oedipus's eyes to his real nature, that he is one accursed and a curse to others, is splendidly brought out. Mr. Laurence Olivier in the opening scene transmits perfectly the noble Oedipus, who grieves for his people suffering from the incomprehensible scourge of a terrible plague, the great prince ready to do anything to discover the cause of the anger of the gods and to appease them. And not less does he shine in his furious dialogue first with Teiresias, the blind seer who, reluctant to speak, tells him at last that he himself is the cause, and then in his fury with the calm and reasonable Creon (played with due composure by Mr. Curzon) whom he accuses of treachery. Teiresias (Mr. Richardson) is superb in dignity—like one of Blake's ancient, sorrowful spirits. And so the tragedy mounts and mounts, Jocasta, Dame Sybil Thorndike, who has almost the hardest part of all, contributing now relief to Oedipus's obscure misgivings, now driving them home. The confronted shepherds, witnesses to Oedipus's birth, (Mr. Miles Malleson and Mr. Relph) contribute their fatal evidence perfectly in character. And at the climax (Mr. Olivier's intonations have been admirable throughout) we hear rung from him two groans, half-animal and as expressive of astounded pain as a woman's cry the moment when her child is born. And in a sense it is a rebirth for Oedipus : for, self-blinded at the end, his eyes are at last opened. The Sophoclean Reversal is complete, both within and without, at last he has discovered *the truth about himself*. " All men live in some kind of illusion or ignorance until the gods force the truth on them " (*Sophoclean Tragedy*, C. M. Bowra). And that, in addition to man's dependence upon " circumstance," is the moral of this great tragedy. In the reception of that truth men show their worth." The Chorus is majestic, though sometimes their muttered comments are too dim, like church responses. M. Saint-Denis's production is marvellously good. Desmond MacCarthy

MAHLER AND THE CONCERT SEASON

The " Mahler problem " boils down in England to something painfully simple : how to hear enough of his music often enough repeated to form a reasonable conclusion about its value. Apart from *Das Lied von der Erde* and the Ninth Symphony (which have been admirably recorded), opportunity is scant. And yet his is not a large output : nine symphonies, four or five song cycles and a handful of miscellaneous *Lieder*. It's true that the song cycles have elaborate orchestral accompaniments, while conversely the symphonies often demand vocal assistance, and seldom run for less than an hour apiece ; these are certainly obstacles to frequent performance. But after making every allowance one can think of, it is surely a bit of a scandal that we should have had to wait forty years for the first English performance of the Fifth Symphony. This was given last Sunday by the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Dr. Heinz Unger at the Stoll Theatre ; and, by one of those coincidences, the Fourth followed two days later in a performance by the National Symphony Orchestra under Mr. Sidney Beer at the Albert Hall. And so we find ourselves once again peering at these extensive panoramas, and speculating as to what they would be like if we knew them intimately.

By the way, how many—even among the professed fans—really do know them ? On Sunday, Dr. Unger made a number of cuts in the Scherzo and the Finale of the Fifth (I only knew this myself because I had a score), and I could not help wondering what proportion of the large and enthusiastic audience spotted these excisions, and—of those who did—how many genuinely felt that the structure of the music had been thereby impaired. In point of fact, *has* the music any true organic structure ? Of course, themes recur, and can be subjected to paper " analysis." But what we seemed to witness on Sunday was great bales of resplendent materials in the process of being unrolled before our eyes : the yard that lay on the counter was often quite fascinating in colour and design . . . and so was the next yard . . and the next . . . But didn't it all want " making up " into something ? These are the oldest questions of Mahlerian criticism—and to-day's answer is invariably contradicted by to-morrow's experience ! By contrast with the Fifth Symphony, the Fourth seems fully " made up," composed, complete ; listening to it is an enchanting experience—once we catch the clue. It is a long fairy-tale of childhood ; a landscape of innocence and lost content, seen nostalgically from the other side of the looking-glass. This emotional scheme, implicit throughout the work, becomes explicit only in the finale, where the words of the soprano solo, from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, present us with a child's vision of heaven. In the uncosy expanses of the Albert Hall, we could often only guess how deliciously these stanzas were being sung by Mme Elisabeth Schumann.

Even the failures of Mahler are more interesting than the successes of many other men, and we are deeply grateful for these attempts to break away from the monotony of our war-time concert fare. There are other signs of initiative : the excellent string quartet cycle now running at the Wigmore Hall, an interesting Sunday evening series at the Whitehall by the Jacques String Orchestra, which includes Britten's *Serenade* and *Illuminations* as well as Tippett's *Double Concerto ;* and some more French concerts at the Wigmore, at one of which (on December 2nd) Maurice Gendron and Britten play 'cello sonatas by Fauré and Debussy, and Pierre Bernac sings new songs by Poulenc. In fact, there's plenty doing. But to collect all the season's announcements and programmes is a task demanding a telephone, a cool temper and a lot of time. Why make things so needlessly difficult for the intending patron? Before the war there used to be available at Queen's Hall a periodical schedule of all London orchestral concerts, by whomsoever promoted. The present dispersal of London music over so many theatres and halls makes it harder than ever for the public to keep track of events. I suggest to our various musical magnates that they would be doing a public service (not least to members of the Forces on leave) if they could manage to concentrate their multifarious announcements into a single monthly bulletin.

DESMOND SHAWE-TAYLOR

RADIO NOTES

Telepathy Programme. At last something really novel and exciting! Though I was so unfortunate as to miss his programme on Scapegoats, I knew enough of Rayner Heppenstall's abilities as a writer to expect a good deal of the first broadcast in his new series: "Is there anything in it?" This proved to be one of the most entertaining and stimulating radio experiences I can remember. The cadenza of appalling screams, most realistically furnished by Miss Grizelda Harvey, which opened the programme, was immediate evidence that here was a newcomer to radio with a genuine feeling for the medium. As Richard Strauss once said to Stravinsky: "Always start your piece with a bang—so as to capture the audience's attention. After that you can do what you like." I quote from memory, but the advice was to that effect and it has never seemed to me as absurd as Stravinsky evidently thought it. After those screams one simply had to go on listening. If they had occurred in the middle of a play, they might have seemed merely conventional; but to have started like that was a stroke of genius.

I have always found it difficult to see how anybody could reject the evidence in favour of telepathic communication: the coincidental solution of an experience that comes to most of us at times is surely far less plausible. Still, the events in the first sequences of this programme did seem merely alleged, though they were pleasant enough to listen to, what with Anthony Hopkins's clever musical illustrations of philosophical theories (there is a tip here for those who care to follow it up), and a poem by Donne most attractively spoken in what I took to be a reconstruction of Jacobean diction. The effect was curiously moving and impressed me as authentic; it was a good precursor of the card Mr. Heppenstall had up his sleeve—an actual experiment in telepathy with the listeners (I hope) co-operating. Mr. S. G. Soal, who conducted the experiment, followed the system invented, in 1934, by Professor Rhine. Research since that date has been on a large scale, and is conclusive except to those who prefer to base their continued scepticism on charges of fraud or hyperæsthesia. No one, however, need suppose that those who conducted the experiment last week will think it worth while to cheat over the results; and hyperæsthesia is obviously ruled out in this case, since the experiment was based on sight alone. It was an eerie sensation, concentrating intensely on the bubble of silence which seemed to become visible, so that the ghosts of the proposed Rose and Skull hung in the air before one, like Macbeth's dagger, persisting in the musical phrases which had drawn their outlines for us. Yet, as I wrote down my R's or S's, I could not help wondering whether I was not guessing from the tone of Cyril Gardiner's voice, as he uttered each number, or—more simply still—making a plausible pattern of letters on the paper before me. Anyhow, we shall see, when the results are published. Those who had the misfortune to miss this peculiar and enthralling broadcast should make sure they hear the next in the series—on the subject of Witchcraft—which is announced for November. A special word of praise to John Glyn Jones for his imaginative production.

When it was first broadcast, in 1938, I recall thinking Denis Johnston's *Weep for Polyphemus* one of the cleverest radio contrivances I had ever heard; but, listening to it again last week I was a little disappointed. Perhaps it was the acting, which was never more than adequate and sometimes a good deal less; perhaps it was the meaningless and outmoded system of dual narrators; but somehow this in many ways brilliant examination of the problem of Swift seemed to have faded in the interval. It was a pity the author should not have thought it worth while to revise the script so as to bring the technique up to date.

RECOMMENDATIONS.—*October 28th.* "Dutch Autumn Landscape, 1945" (Godfrey Winn, 3.45); "False Identities" (9.15); Kodaly, String Quartet in D (11.3).

October 29th. Chehov, *The Seagull* (9.15 p.m.); "Bridge on the Air" (11.3).

October 30th. Recital, Nicolas Medtner (10.15 p.m.).

October 31st. Symphony Concert (Beecham, 7.0); "Return Journey" (Eric Linklater, 10.0).

November 1st. Recital: Vaughan Williams, Schubert and Wolf (3.0); "In Search of the Brontës" (Rayner Heppenstall, 6.30); "To Start You Talking" (*Traditions*, 8.10); "Mystery and Imagination" (Lord Dunsany, 9.30).

November 2nd. Borodin, String Quartet in D (7 p.m.)

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

THE MOVIES

"Kutuzov," at the Tatler
"The Man on America's Conscience," and "Bewitched," at the Ritz
"The Seventh Veil," at the Leicester Square
"Indiscretion," at Warner's

Not a very exciting week. Suppose we dabble in history and psychology (elementary). *Kutuzov* and *The Man on America's Conscience* provide the history lesson, with material for a study in national styles. History—so far as film-making goes—seems inseparable from hero-worship, so that in no film are we likely to find that distribution and aims and effects, of individual and social stresses, that gives the historical view. Kutuzov was the general commanding the Russian armies that defeated Napoleon; therefore Kutuzov was a national hero and must be admitted to the Soviet pantheon. Grant the pedestal: the one-eyed old tortoise, asleep at meetings, has to be woken up a little. He is shown, at Borodino, to have been no mean tactician; while Napoleon frowns on destiny from a hill, Kutuzov squats in his cabin, focusing the single eye on a map, playing off his commanders one against another, waiting for the last possible moment to attack. He claims Borodino as a victory. Later, when Moscow is burning, he does the only thing he could do—nothing; but this "masterly inactivity" is presented as the fruit of uninterrupted concentration—hence, we are told, his habit of napping in the presence of his generals. So he wasn't so old, dull, crafty, as we had supposed! A touch of passion, even of genius, is infused by posterity. Well, it still doesn't make him a Suvorov, and this isn't a film to be compared with *Suvorov*. But despite the romantic distortion, it isn't a bad film. It is full of character, its battle pieces are magnificent, Napoleon comes to life for a change, and S. Dakki's performance as old Kutuzov is really notable. If it has been filmed on the principle that its scenes should resemble historical paintings, this has been done without loss of energy.

Indeed, I very much prefer the sound pictorial qualities of *Kutuzov* to those of *The Man on America's Conscience*, which derive from the glossier magazine advertisement. President Johnson, in old age defending himself before the Senate, looks what he is: Mr. Van Hefflin made up as Messrs. Hope & Crosby are disguised in the beginning of their *Road to Utopia.* The political setting is not much more convincing: what, in fact, Johnson was impeached for is never disclosed, and one gets the impression that the hero is being heavily whitewashed all along. The beginning has spirit, but it soon peters out, and I can hardly believe that this film, however badly cut about in the years before it reached the public, ever possessed outstanding merit.

Students of psychology may be surprised by the dramatic climax of *Bewitched*, in which Mr. Edmund Gwenn hypnotises a girl condemned for murder, and conjures up ghosts of good and evil. Poor Mr. Gwenn, rarely has he been in a more awkward situation. The prison governor had previously objected to hypnosis as a sort of witchcraft, and, as it turns out, he wasn't far wrong. Split personality, of course, is the theme of this eerie nonsense. *The Seventh Veil*, on the other hand, has a basis of genuine psychology. I don't think that in the end its mixture of analysis and old-fashioned drama comes off, but the character of the pianist (Ann Todd) is well exposed and the concert scenes are the most convincing I have seen in any film. Partly owing to the music I found *The Seventh Veil*, for three-quarters of the way, enjoyable. Director, Peter Godfrey.

Indiscretion is another variant of the soldier-for-Christmas story, with Barbara Stanwyck as the hungry girl, and Dennis Morgan as her slice of turkey. Sidney Greenstreet huffs in an amiable role and the whole thing is sweet to the eye and goes skittishly.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

Correspondence

PLIGHT OF THE SUDETENS

SIR,—Having just returned from a visit to areas of the Sudetenland and from an inspection of several German internment camps in Czechoslovakia, I would like to correct some of the impressions given to Mr. Brailsford by his informers who did not have these opportunities.

All the camps which I visited except one (the worst—at Modrany, which is for Czech collaborators and Reich Germans in transit) were of my own choosing. All were camps which had been built and used previously by the Germans—one had been used to house Czech labour at a Junkers factory and the others had been built for prisoners of war, mostly British and French.

I am quite confident that in none of the camps which I saw was there any corporal brutality or ill-treatment. Nor was overcrowding anything like the conditions which Mr. Brailsford describes. The barracks consisted of large wooden rooms with beds in two tiers. Each bed had sometimes two and sometimes three blankets. Some had a feather eiderdown used in that part of the world. Here again I went into barracks of my own choosing, and not only into the one where I was first conducted.

I agree that the food ration is pitiable, but I very strongly disagree that there is no food shortage in Czechoslovakia. Their ration is 2,400 calories compared with our 3,000, and they have nothing like the unrationed foods which we have. They face a new cut before the winter. I myself during the whole three weeks I was there had neither butter nor milk in the Prague hotel in which I stayed.

It is also untrue that German children get no milk. Those up to six get ¼ litre per day. It is insufficient, but so is the diet of Czech children. The Czechs certainly have less food than the Americans, but I did not find the Germans in Frankfurt any less hungry. Why, then, this agitation against the Czechs? Let something be done to prevent starvation also in the areas for which we are responsible, and if we expect the Czechs to cut their rations to feed the Germans, to whose transfer we agreed some time ago, let us try cutting our rations down to the Czech level and see what happens.

A point which seems to me always to be overlooked in this whole question is that it was agreed some time ago that the Germans would be transferred and the rate and methods worked out. It was generally agreed in Allied circles that it would not be difficult to absorb these people into Germany.

Into this situation, however, erupted the whole problem of Polish annexation and the flooding of Germany with millions of Germans for whom we had never reckoned, with the result that the process of transferring the Sudeten Germans has been suspended. I assure you that it is this suspension—and not continued expulsion—which is causing the gravest misery among the great mass of the Sudeten Germans to-day. The vast majority of the camps are "transit," camps, and the more transitory they are the better, for Czechs and Germans alike.

I met not one single German—not even the privileged "anti-Fascists" who thought there was any

place for a German minority in Czechoslovakia again. If we are to alleviate the lot of these people, we have got to speed up, and not try and prevent, their transfer.

SHEILA GRANT DUFF

The Clock House,
Farnborough, Kent.

THE FISH QUEUE

SIR,—May I comment on Roland Wild's article about Grimsby? Fishermen have, on the average, 36–48 hours in dock between trips. The whole of this time is not holiday as in many cases they have to help with the unloading of the catch and the loading of provisions, etc., for the next trip. While at sea, all the crew, with the exception of the skipper and mate, live and sleep in one small room. The conditions are such that they would be condemned as unfit for human habitation if found on land. The wages quoted in the article are war-time wages and bear no relationship to the pre-war wage. At the moment, fishermen can command a high remuneration owing to the shortage of fishermen—many still being in the Navy—and bonuses are high owing to the plentiful supply of fish in seas which have not been fished for over five years. Before 1939, the skipper and mate received 10 and 7 per cent. of the net profits; they received no wage and consequently often finished a trip in debt. The majority of the crew received a wage of £2 weekly to which was added a small bonus for the catch and a share of the liver money. They were lucky to average £4 10*s*. per week; many of them received much less, especially the North Sea crews. The fishermen are not covered by N.H.I. or Unemployment Benefit.

The statement that the fish is not unloaded by a modern method is, of course, open to question. The facilities for handling fish at Grimsby are the most efficient and modern methods to be found in any fishing port in the country and probably the world. The methods may seem antiquated when compared with modern industrial methods, but the fishing industry has not kept pace with modern development and is in great need of extensive overhaul and scientific planning and research.

Fish has been dumped this year by foreign trawlers which have been refused permission to land at Grimsby. This action was the result of the recent strike of British fishermen at Grimsby who protested against the lumpers being used to land foreign catches while their own catches deteriorated. Only a few weeks ago, 350 lumpers were employed to land the catches; this is a great contrast to the 200 fish merchants licensed by the M.O.F. (the pre-war number of over 400 was reduced by Lord Woolton in 1941). Despite the war-time shortage and almost negligible landing of fish at Grimsby, it calls for comment that 200 firms were still able to make handsome profits out of a shortage. The present system of fish allocation is a fish merchant's dream; each firm is allowed a percentage, determined on its pre-war business, of the total landings. Both the prices given and received by the merchant for the fish are strictly controlled and the merchant receives quite a substantial profit for the mere distribution of the fish. He has none of his pre-war worries—obtaining the fish by competition at the auctions and then being unable to dispose of it.

Despite the fishing industry being Grimsby's main industry, it has very little representation on the Borough Council. The employers have only a few councillors amongst their ranks and the employees are without representation. Despite "the eager and aggressive octogenarians who bark" it would be difficult to find a more reactionary council in England. The Council has no control over the docks as the L.N.E.R. levy and collect the rates.

In conclusion, may I make an appeal to Socialists to take a more active interest in the fishing industry. It is one of Britain's leading industries, yet, unless it is completely overhauled and scientific planning and control are introduced, it will degenerate into a liability on the country. It can be likened to the mining industry for the fishermen, who lead dangerous lives (37 ships and over 500 men were lost in ten pre-war years from Grimsby and Hull alone) and receive a miserable share of the profits made. As in the mining industry, son has followed in father's footsteps, but unless conditions and pay are bettered there will soon be a shortage of fishermen. There is as big a case for the public ownership of the docks and Government control of the fishing industry as there is for the nationalisation of the mines.

DAVID H. WIDOCKS

19 Old Deer Park Gardens,
Richmond, Surrey.

SOCIALIST TRANSPORT POLICY

SIR,—Judging by his article entitled "Socialist Transport Policy" in your issue of October 20th, Mr. Ernest Davies wishes to stampede the Government into rushing in, under his guidance, where it may wisely fear to tread without circumspection.

The nationalisation of road transport alone—and this is the only section of transport of which my experience qualifies me to speak—must be a very long and difficult job which should, therefore, be approached with caution. Adoption of the policy of "Do it first and find out how to do it afterwards" might well be fatal. One comparative failure at the present stage would discredit the whole idea of nationalisation of industries in the minds of a large proportion of the electorate.

Mr. Davies himself remarks that "The Labour Party will have difficulties enough in carrying out its programme of nationalisation; and it will be sound policy to proceed speedily to the conversion to public ownership of one industry ready for it."

I agree. But I do *not* agree that this points to the industry of transport. Neither does the T.U.C., in whose Report it is stated that in moving towards the nationalisation of transport adverse public opinion must be taken into account; action should not be precipitate, but should follow upon "public relations activities"; and nationalisation of the multitude of hauliers would be a very difficult job of indefinite duration.

Mr. Davies seems to think that the difficulty could be circumvented by a scheme of partial nationalisation under which only the biggest hauliers would be incorporated and some 60,000 "small" men could be given an option on terms.

Here his views are diametrically opposed to those of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, in whose Report we read "To take one part of road haulage and to leave the remainder in private hands, even with a more rigid form of control than that which exists to-day, would militate against the smooth and effective working of the nationalised system."

Transport is an essential servant of other industries. At a time when Sir Stafford Cripps and his Working Parties are endeavouring to improve the efficiency of our industries in the home and export markets, would it be wise hurriedly to condemn this essential servant for an indefinite period to a condition inconsistent with truly smooth and effective working?

The Report of the National Executive states that the road transport industry has been developed in no more than a quarter of a century from mere localised services up to the ownership and operation of some half a million vehicles covering the whole country, and goes on to say that this has been done by "individualists in whom the competitive spirit is highly developed."

As would be expected, these independent individualists, themselves working men, hate the very idea of nationalisation applied to themselves. To them it would mean that they would no longer remain their own masters, the alternative lying before them being between annihilation and a species of slavery. Rightly or wrongly, this is their view of the situation.

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ALISON UTTLEY

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It is no simple matter to nationalise, against their owners' will, something over 50,000 family businesses built up on local connections and friendships and largely operated from the proprietor's private house with his wife or daughter as his sole clerical staff.

This is Mr. Davies' idea of an industry "ready" for nationalisation. It is not mine, and I am not disposed to join him in blaming the Government for hesitancy in selecting as a test case a subject which the Party Executive and the T.U.C. agree in classifying as a very difficult one whose treatment must be indefinitely lengthy and temporarily paralysing before the medicine can be effective.

To adopt the advice of Mr. Davies would be a first-class error in policy of which the Government, if it is as long-sighted as I believe it to be, cannot and should not be expected to make itself guilty.

Road Haulage Association, HORACE WYATT
London, W.1.

KRAMER'S DEFENDER

SIR,—In the *Nationale Rotterdamsche Courant* of October 9th, a report is published of the pleadings, which the counsel of Kramer has made in court in Lueneburg in defence of the "Beast of Belsen." He is said to have used the following words: "The concentration camps in Germany contained the scum of the European ghettos, men who had no idea how to behave in daily life."

If these words actually were used, can you imagine the feelings of one whose next-of-kin and whose best friends have been murdered in the camp of Belsen, all of them most decent people, whose families had lived in Western Europe for centuries, who had respectable professions and had done their full duty towards mankind?

I understand and fully realise—though that is not always easy after all that I and others have had to suffer from Nazi barbarity—that even Nazi criminals should be given a fair trial before being sentenced. But don't you think the counsel of that wilful murderer is going a bit too far by urging pleas in his defence, which are not only contrary to the truth, but must hurt the feelings of those left behind in the most cruel way?

And even if—what is not true—there would have been the "scum of the ghettos" in those camps, would that be, in your opinion, a sufficient excuse to order the extermination of those tens of thousands in the most inhuman way?

Doorn, Holland, O. A. M. WASSERMAN

[Critic refers in the London Diary to this and other letters received on this subject.—ED. *N.S. & N.*]

DEMOBILISATION

SIR,—The following points might, I think, prove of interest on the subject of the frequent announcements *re* the slowing up of officers' demobilisation.

(i) The fairness of the whole scheme is now completely nullified, both by the disparities between the various services and by the different rates of demobbing within a service. And to harp upon the essential justice of the scheme being maintained, as Mr. Lawton did in his S.E.A.C. tour, is to miss the wood by looking for the trees.

(ii) It must have been obvious that the disparity between officers and men would arise when the scheme was drawn up. Why, then, was no announcement made at the time? Instead we were encouraged to look for houses and situations for our impending release which we now find we cannot fill.

(iii) The result is that all those who have endeavoured to give of their best during the war years and have consequently been commissioned and promoted are to be penalised for their efforts. In other words, fortune favours the men who didn't feel inclined to exert themselves.

(iv) It is nothing but sheer hypocrisy to state that a ruthless purge is being carried on to see that all officers are fully employed. At the lowest formation levels, at least one-half of the officers are redundant and acknowledge the fact. And ascending the scale of H.Q.'s the number of officers who could be dispensed with must easily run into the four-figure mark. Otherwise how is it that almost every afternoon can be devoted to hunting, shooting, walking or to a hopeless endeavour to find some method of passing away the time. This is not hearsay but what is known to every honest staff officer.

(v) The inference is obvious. The Government have been completely bamboozled again by the military high-up whose only interest is in preserving their capital—i.e., bodies in uniform. By all means give the regular Army better conditions, their wives in garrison with them, good prospects—and then make them do an eight-hour day of work and let the rest of us go home. Surely six years out of any man's life is enough for anyone to ask. CAPTAIN

HEARING AIDS

SIR,—With reference to W. L. Goodman's letter in your October 13th issue, we did not list a kit of parts for a deaf aid to be constructed at home, although a number of our customers seem to have obtained our components for that sort of work, judging by correspondence.

We did, however, manufacture two complete hearing aids, of which we enclose details; the price, as you will note, is far less than the £10 Mr. Goodman mentions, and compares with his own *costing*.

These, however, have been discontinued, and it is unlikely that we shall again place them on the market; we found the sales very disappointing. This is probably due to the fact that, although we are a very well-known firm to equipment manufacturers, technicians and experimenters, we do not, perhaps, reach that part of the general public who will be interested in hearing aids, through our general advertisements, nor would our name be so well known to them as it would to the manufacturers, etc., and experimenters to whom our products go.

We think the prices of hearing aids are, to a great extent, brought on by customers themselves. If customers want several hours of solicitous attention in a showroom, with carpets, armchairs, considerable privacy and other comforts, they have to pay for these—it is only natural.

We did not provide such facilities, but worked on the system of home trial and (ours is probably an isolated view) this, we think, is the best way. (It is frequently best for ordinary wireless receivers to be tested by home trial.)

One of the greatest difficulties seems to us to be that deafness hides itself and is sensitive to ridicule. When deafness ceases to be the subject for a joke, the difficulties will disappear, but since individual people change but slowly, if at all, it is probably the next and more enlightened generation that will exhibit change, and hence will benefit.

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NO VISAS?

SIR,—London Diary of last week mentions the refusal of visas and transport facilities to the delegates of Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary and Albania to the World Youth Conference. I should like to draw your attention to the fact that the Austrian Youth delegates have been refused facilities as well, in spite of the fact that the Austrian Provisional Government is recognised by this country and in spite of the fact that the Youth delegation comprises representatives of all existing youth organisations in Austria, i.e., Austrian Scouts, Austrian Socialist Youth, Austrian Youth League and Free Austrian Youth. An official reason for the refusal of facilities was not given, but I understand that facilities are refused because Austrians are still regarded as enemy aliens.

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DENT

BOOKS IN GENERAL

The small lodge on the cliff of Passy, hung like a cage between an upper and lower street, so that by a trick of relativity the top floor of the present Rue Berton is the ground floor of the Rue Raynouard, has been taken as a symbol of the life of Balzac. A trap-door hides the upper from the lower floor. Two houses in one, a life with two front doors, dream and reality; the novelist, too naïve and perhaps too cunning to distinguish between one and the other. Symbol of Balzac's life, the house is a symbol of the frontier life, the trap-door life, of the great artists, who have always lived between two worlds. Here, at the age of forty and no longer a dandy, Balzac wrote his letters to Madame Hanska in Poland, at the same time sleeping with the docile housekeeper who was finally to turn round and blackmail him, and so provide him with the horrifying last chapters of *Le Cousin Pons*. Here, in the worst year of his life, one little blessed with that calm which is—quite erroneously—supposed to be essential to all novelists, Balzac wrote both *Pons* and *La Cousine Bette*, respectively the best constructed and the most fluent, animated and subtle of his novels. The dramatic duality runs through everything in that prodigious life.

A new biography* of Balzac was published in Paris last year, and we must hope for an English translation. It contains nothing new, but it gathers all the immense biographical material in a couple of volumes. Its detail is as crowded and exhaustive as a Balzac novel; the tone is warm but sceptical, sympathetic but detached. Very rightly, M. Billy looks twice and three times at everything Balzac said about his life; for Balzac's biographers are dealing with the hallucinations of a giant, one of the most histrionic egotists in the history of literature. One can imagine a less diffuse biography; one in which a picture of the time played a greater part and where all the chronological detail of a chaotic Bohemian career was not played up to the same pitch. But, given Balzac's intellectual gluttony and the lavishness of his comedy, one is not inclined to complain.

Like the tons of bronze and antiques—he estimated the weight and value himself with the care of an auctioneer's valuer—with which he darkened the house he finally took for Madame Hanska when he had got his hands near her fortune, it must be confessed that the novels of Balzac weigh upon the memory. The reader is as exhausted as the novelist by the sheer load of collection. One sees him as the stolid bulldozer of documentation, the immense, quarrying and expatiating realist, sharpening his tools on some hard view of his own time. He seems to be stuck in his task. Yet this impression is a false one, as we find whenever we open a novel of his again. Balzac is certainly the novelist who most completely exemplifies the "our time" novelist, but not by his judgments on his society. He simply *is* his time. He is identified with it, by all the greedy innocence of genius. The society of rich peasants brought to power by revolution and dictatorship, pushing into business and speculation, buying up houses and antiques, founding families, grabbing at money and pleasure, haunted by their tradition of parsimony and hard work, and with the peasant's black and white ideas about everything, is contained in Balzac himself. He shares their illusions. Like them he was humble when he was poor, arrogant when he was rich. As with them, his extravagance was one side of the coin; on the other was the face of the peasant miser. The cynic lived in a world of romantic optimism. We see in Balzac the theatrical phase of a century's illusions, before these have been assimilated and trodden into familiar hypocrisies. To us Balzac's dominant preoccupation with money, for example, appears at first to be the searching, scientific and prosaic interest of the documentary artist. It was, I fancy, nothing of the sort. For him money was romantic; it was hope and ideal, it was despair and evil. It was not the machinery of society, but the dark animating, theatrical spirit.

Balzac learned about money, as M. Billy says, at his printing works in the Rue du Marais. He expected to find that fallen aristocrat, the goddess Fortune of the 18th century; instead he found that in the 19th century the goddess had become a bourgeois bookkeeper. His laundry bills, his tailor's bill, his jeweller's bills, were mixed with the printing accounts. The imagination of the born business man is always governable; Balzac's was not. It was, financially speaking, out of date. Like his father, who also was willing to work hard enough, he worked for Fortune, not for Profit; and one is inclined to see in this attitude to money not his realism but the earliest example of his essentially Romantic spirit. Balzac's attitude to money was that of a man who did not understand money, who could not keep it in his hands, the plagued spendthrift and natural bankrupt. His promissory notes are a kind of poetry in his early years; later on they become articles of moral indignation; in the end—to quote M. Billy's delightful euphemism—he lost all *pudeur morale*. The creation of debts began as mischance and confusion; it became an appetite, one of those dominant passions which he thought occurred in all natures, but which really occur only among the most monstrous egotists. Madame Hanska's fortune did not calm him. He went on buying here and there, incurring more debts, scheming without check. And the last people he thought of paying were his wretched relations, and especially his mother or his obliging housekeeper. To these he behaved with the hypocrisy and meanness of a miser, and the worse he treated them the more he attacked them.

At this point it is interesting to compare Balzac with Scott, whom he admired and consciously imitated, for if Balzac was a genius he was also a made writer. Madame Hanska's estate in Poland was for many years his visionary Abbotsford; the passion for antiques, the debts, and the crushing labour, the days and nights of writing without sleep, were Abbotsford too. Balzac saw himself as an aristocrat, (and Scott saw himself as a Laird—by no means the first or last middle-class writers to provide themselves with distinguished ancestors). He went to the length of travelling to Vienna as a Marquis, with coronets on his luggage; it was ruinous, he discovered, in tips. But the honourable Scott was broken by debts; he slaved to pay them back and wore out his talent. Balzac's debts, on the other hand, certainly did not ruin him as a writer. They were the natural expression of a voracious imagination. One may doubt whether any of his mistresses inspired him—though clearly he owed a vast amount to their maternal sympathy—but one can be certain that Balzac's imagination was ignited by the romance of purchase, by the intoxication of expense, by the mere sensual possession of things. It is significant that the impelling force in his mind as a novelist was the discovery of what he called the "materials of civilisation," the literal materials; and although he considered this a scientific discovery, it was really a mysticism of things. Every object he bought, from the famous walking-stick to the museum pieces, represented an act of auto-intoxication that released in him the capacity—so vital for the creative artist—to become unreal.

It is easy, as M. Billy says, a hundred years after, to blame Madame Hanska for delaying her marriage with Balzac and for adding to the afflictions of his life of appalling labour; but one understands her hesitation after reading his later, quite maniacal letters about money and things :—

> Je suis sûr qu'au poids il y aura, dans notre maison, trois mille kilogrammes de cuivres et bronzes dorés. C'est effrayant, le bronze ! Cette maison est, comme je te le disais, une mine de cuivre doré, car mon ébéniste me disait qu'il y en a mille kilogrammes. A huit francs le kilo, à vendre aux chaudronniers, c'est trente-deux mille francs de valeur réelle. Juge de la valeur, en y ajoutant la valeur d'art.

Madness, the acquisitive madness. His brain gives way under the strain of his schemes and combinations. Nevertheless, *Le Cousin Pons* and *La Cousine Bette* were written in that year; and when Pons makes the fortune of his persecutors with his collection of antiques which they had despised, one sees Balzac avenging himself for the complaints of his mistress. No; he was not weighed down by debts, in the sense of having to work too hard to pay them off. He never paid them off; never intended to do so. Or rather, let us put it this way; in his heart, or (as we say nowadays) unconsciously, Balzac knew that it would be fatal for him to be cured of his money neurosis. He knew, even as he strove to pay his debts, that to pay would remove the indispensable stimulus of his genius. It would have been as fatal as giving up the coffee that kept him going night after night. His extravagances floated him on the swift stream of unreality.

The ox-like groans, the Sisyphean straining and lamentation of Balzac, his boasting, the bosom-beating of his letters to women like Madame Carraud before whose wry face he parades in the role of the indomitable martyr and victim of circumstance, have created an imaginary Balzac. One sees—his own phrase—"the galley-slave of fame." A rather different impression was formed by his contemporaries. Once he had put his pen down he was childishly gay :—

> Naïveté, puérilité, bonté, ces trois mots reviennent sous la plume de tous les contemporains. Le portrait de Balzac que nous a laissé le poète des *Méditations* se trouve confirmé en tous points par celui qu'a tracé Georges Sand : puéril et puissant, toujours envieux d'un bibelot et jamais jaloux d'une gloire, sincère jusqu'à la modestie, vantard jusqu'à la hâblerie, confiant en lui-même et dans les autres, très expansif, très bon et très fou, avec un sanctuaire de raison intérieure où il rentrait pour tout dominer dans son œuvre, cynique dans la chasteté, ivre en buvant de l'eau, intempérant de travail et sobre d'autres passions, positif et romanesque avec un égal excès, crédule et sceptique, plein de contrastes et de mystères . . .

In his admirations and instant schemes, Balzac was like a child for whom everything happens *now* and in a *now* that is connected with no future. Certainly with no future of incurred obligations. The burden of Balzac's life is not apparent until one sees him at work; and then we see that not debt, but his method of writing, was the fatal aggravation.

As I have said, Balzac is a made, or rather re-made, writer. There were times when he rushed down to the printers at 11 o'clock at night and they took the chapter of his book page by page as he wrote it. But such moments of inspired exhibitionism were rare. Balzac is the gifted talker whose pen splutters when he comes to write what he has just spoken. No doubt he could have turned out the cheap thrillers of his early period, as easily as he spoke; but with his other books the process was agonising. His method has often been described. There would be several versions of the text, each one illegible beneath its erasures and additions; chapters were put into different places, more chapters were sandwiched in between. Pages and pages scrapped, more pages added. It was the method of *Le Chef-d'Œuvre Inconnu*. The historian of the contemporary scene had only to go out of his door to see some new thing which must be squeezed somewhere into the text. And this was not the end of the confusion and the struggle. Once the printers had sorted out the manuscript and had produced their galleys, the ungovernable author began a hardly less drastic process of destruction and reconstruction. Night after night, from midnight until seven—and these were merely regular hours. There were days and nights of almost continuous labour. "*Il ne savait pas sa langue*," said Gautier. The time spent, and the printer's costs, would have eaten seriously into earnings not already mortgaged by extravagance.

---

* *Vie de Balzac*. By André Billy. Flammarion. 2 vols. 130 *francs*.

On the subject of Balzac's relations with women, M. Billy makes the normal judgment. I mean he does not support the eccentric theory that Balzac was impotent or chaste. There is plenty of evidence that he was neither one nor the other. The portraits of the women are especially well drawn in this biography and drawn with good sense; and the Hanska relationship is done with the good humour, scepticism and affection which are appropriate to the loves of the forties, when one of the parties is a rich widow. M. Billy's researches in the matter of Balzac's lies and mystifications gives a third dimension to what is a straight biography. As for Balzac's political and religious opinions and, indeed, his opinions in general, they are set in the general scheme of his character; there seems nothing to add to M. Billy's astute reflection :—

> On peut croire qu'il avait déjà perdu à cette époque la liberté d'opter en tout désintéressement ; il était déjà la proie de l'argent et l'on ne serait pas juste si l'on n'ajoutait pas : la proie d'une imagination tyrannique qui, tous les matins et tous les soirs, lui mettait la plume en main. Que lui importaient les problèmes où l'ardeur d'âme et de sang des jeunes gens de son âge s'exténuaient ? Il était pris tout entier par le plaisir et l'ambition.

The middle classes had indeed lost their freedom of choice. They were committed. And as Balzac himself suggested, each class is committed in its turn. It is the second phase of political power.

V. S. PRITCHETT

OURSELVES

An Essay on Man. By ERNST CASSIRER. *Oxford University Press.* 20*s.*

Professor Cassirer's latest book is a study of man. Beginning with the highly disputable remark, "self-knowledge is the highest aim of philosophical enquiry"—most philosophers have thought that the universe was the proper object of philosophical enquiry, nor are we wholly reassured by the information that both the human order and the cosmic order are "different expressions of a common underlying principle," so that the knowledge of man is a key to the knowledge of all—Professor Cassirer indicates the different conceptions of man that have at different times been suggested. Man is a rational being in the sense that, when questioned, he can answer rationally (Socrates); he is a social animal (Aristotle); he is at once the glory and the scum of the universe (Pascal); he is an immortal soul; he is the highest of the mammals; he is biologically the most inefficient of the mammals, he is this, that and the other. . . . Professor Cassirer dwells on the curious conflict about his nature which Christianity provoked. For the Stoic, man is an independent being who is enjoined to become self-sufficient, the instrument of his emancipation being reason; he is therefore bidden to develop his reason and to rely on it. For St. Augustine and Aquinas, man is a fallen angel who is wholly dependent on his Maker; because he *is* fallen, his reason unaided leads him astray; therefore, he is bidden to distrust his reason; its exercise is his peril, its pride his temptation. In due course the Christian view wins the victory and we find Pascal using the power of his incomparable reason to demonstrate reason's nothingness.

Our own times are characterised by the absence of any accepted mode of interpreting man's nature, with the result that each of us interprets according to taste. What is Professor Cassirer's? His view is that man is essentially a symbol-making or symbolic creature, symbolic because expressive. Alone among living creatures he expresses his attitude to the universe and proceeds in his works to "stabilise and propagate" what he has expressed. The forms of these works are various; they are language, myth, religion, art, science and history. These have come in the course of centuries to form a many-coloured garment in which man has clothed himself and of which he cannot now divest himself. They are, as it were, a web that he has woven, a web whose threads are the various expressions of his own past experience, in which he is now entangled. The web is not reality; it is reality's symbol; nor can we now "see or know anything except by the interposition of this artificial medium." Hence, in defining man as a symbol-making animal Cassirer seems to imply that it is only through symbols that he can now deal with reality.

POSTAGE on this issue is : Inland, 1½*d.; Foreign,* 1*d. ; Canada,* 1*d.*

I confess that as a whole the theory puzzles me. Religion, myth, art, science and the rest, the symbols which man's creative activity has devised, are in general represented as standing between him and the reality which they symbolise. They are a web of man's weaving in which he is inextricably entangled. It is, then, a little surprising to find Cassirer, as the argument draws to its conclusion, speaking of "human culture . . . as the process of man's progressive self-liberation," and of the products of man's cultural activity as the witnesses to man's "new power—the power to build up a world of his own, an 'ideal' world." Philosophy he describes as the search for unity in this ideal world. Is it? I should have thought that it was the search for unity in the actual world—not in what Cassirer calls "an ideal," but what, on his premises, I cannot help denominating less politely as a "fake world," but in reality itself. I do not see how Cassirer's general position is to be distinguished from the view that the more we think, the further we drift from reality. This may be true, but I should not myself have regarded the process as one of "self-liberation," nor can I wholly rid myself of the suspicion that philosophy is an attempt to discover the truth about the world, and not the unity of a lot of fairy stories with which the exuberance of man's myth-making capacity has invested it.

C. E. M. JOAD

MR. O'CASEY'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Drums under the Window. By SEAN O'CASEY. *Macmillan.* 15*s.*

This is the third volume of Mr. O'Casey's autobiography; a fourth, we are told, will complete the cycle. As readers of the two earlier books will recall, it is a story without dates or references, relegated to the third person. What "happens" in *Drums Under the Window* is that its hero works with pick and shovel, carries his brother home to die, watches the break-up of his sister's family, half loses the use of his legs, hears Larkin and Connolly, reads Yeats and Shaw, becomes secretary of a committee during the lock-out, goes to hospital with a tubercular swelling and walks out from his convalescence, joins the citizen army, laments the death of patriots in Easter Week. But the continuity is not so much one of facts, of happenings, as of vision. Certain realities in this life never alter: extreme poverty, the illness resulting from semi-starvation, hatred of tyrants whether English or Popish, dreams of poetry, revolution, freedom. Strongest of all, perhaps, is the sense of glory. The radiance imparted to so many scenes in *Drums Under the Window* and its two predecessors is in part the result of physical disability: as a child O'Casey had been almost blind, and memories of his youth develop a curious unfocused brightness. When he describes the features of a companion, as he does on occasion, the head will suddenly thrust up like that of a pedestrian in the fog, so that it narrowly avoids collision; bands go by, flags wave, crowds surge, and the colour, instead of being broken up in a multitude of points, reaches the eye broad and flat as though the whole thing were a banner. O'Casey shares with Joyce the verbal intensity of the myopic; indeed the style of these volumes owes more than a little to jingle-jangle; but the development here is blurred, ecstatic. Processions and rhetoric; the reader of *Drums Under the Window* encounters a surfeit of both. Sometimes the tone is grandly joking—

> . . . a gorgeous procession, as Hyde tells us himself, taking fully fifty minutes to pass a given pint; and seven packed trains, running side by side, and one after another, carried the quick and the dead to Maynooth. . . .

Sometimes, grand only:

> There was a dire sparkle of vanity lighting this little group of armed men; it sparkled from Connolly's waddle, from the uniformed men stiff to attention, and from the bunch of cock-feathers fluttering in the cap of the Countess. But it was a vanity none could challenge, for it came from a group that was willing to sprinkle itself into oblivion that a change might be born in the long-settled thought of the people. There they stood—a tiny speck of green among a wide surge of muddily-garbed watchers, still and silent, too, as if from their listlessness they were draining out this last drop of energy and hope into this tiny goblet-group of men. . . .

Such writing can claim a certain status, but it is painfully theatrical, and with a writer of Mr. O'Casey's calibre it serves only to muffle original talent. As tableau follows tableau one accumulates a grudge against the Dublin and the Ireland the author is always trying to conjure up at the expense of detail about himself. He seems determined only to put himself into the picture in the shape of fine writing; and yet the bones of his story—the death of his brother Tom and the anecdote of the man with the sabred cheek—when he will let them show, are magnificent. Let us admit that O'Casey isn't the sort of writer who can keep to his material, that when he begins a chapter with quiet statement of fact it is liable to end in fantastic riot, still he must at times have weighed the merit of plain statement. The little group of men in the quotation above, for example, would affect us more if they didn't offer to "sprinkle" themselves "into oblivion." Verbiage of this kind is more noticeable in *Drums Under the Window* than in the earlier volumes, possibly because certain scenes keep reappearing and because one had hoped for a fuller portrait of the author's mind. An autobiography on this scale ought not to leave out anything of importance, and one begins to fear that Mr. O'Casey will have left himself out altogether. This, however, is to prejudge the last volume, which may give the whole narrative an order one can't even yet discern.

Drums Under the Window is, of course, immensely worth reading, as anything, or almost anything, written by Mr. O'Casey must be. And whatever one may think of its imaginative flights there are always voices to break in on dreaming.

> Sean with a group of comrades, all naked to the waist, was wiping the sweat off his steaming body after a rough and racy hurling match, each hurler criticising the play of another, and grumbling that but for this or that hesitation the match would have been won, and, at the end of the Hurling League, a gold medal would hang from the watch-chain of any hurler having a watch, when they caught sight of a comrade cycling furiously over the sward towards them.
>
> — Dhress yourselves! he shouted, while he was still pedalling; dhress yourselves, an' quit arguin'. He flung himself from his bicycle to run into their midst: Ireland calls again!
>
> — She's always at it, grumbled a back, forcing a damp body into his shirt; what th' hell's she want now?
>
> — The Standing Committee of the Hierarchy in Maynooth has declared against Irish as an essential subject in the New University: and we're all wanted for a meeting at once.
>
> — The bishops again! growled a lusty forward. I guessed as much, for they were always in Ireland's way when she went forward. But let them look to themselves this time, for we are not now what we once were; and raising his hurley over his head, he shouted, Who's with Dr. O'Hickey? Irish in the University—or else. . . . !
>
> All their hurleys flew into the air, and all shouted together, Irish in the University—or else. . . . !

That tells one more about Ireland than all the political rainbows and thunderclaps with which Mr. O'Casey's story is packed.

G. W. STONIER

IS THE KEY TO HEALTH IN THE SOIL ?

Farming and Gardening for Health or Disease. By Sir Albert Howard. *Faber.* *12s. 6d.*

Agriculture To-day and To-morrow. Edited and introduced by Sir John Russell, O.B.E., D.Sc., F.R.S. *Michael Joseph.* *8s. 6d.*

Problems of the Countryside. By C. S. Orwin. *Cambridge University Press.* 3*s.* 6*d.*

Sir Albert Howard is a distinguished agricultural scientist with many years of practical experience in farming, particularly in India. He has also become the foremost figure in what is now known as " the organic " school of thought that holds that chemical manures are inimical to the health of the soil, and, *ipso facto*, to the health of plants, animals and man. It is significant that the enthusiasts for chemical manures have long since had to abandon their original claims that " artificials " can be a substitute for dung and compost. They now adopt the line that artificials should be used in conjunction with organic fertilisers that build up a good humus content in the soil. The " organic " enthusiasts reply to this by saying (*a*) that the effect of chemical manures remains harmful, and (*b*) that if the soil is properly fed with humus, chemical manuring is unnecessary and a waste of money.

Sir Albert, in *Farming and Gardening for Health or Disease*, produces an imposing array of evidence, obtained at first hand and by practical experience, to support his views. He shows, for example, that, over 26 years of testing, his oxen that were fed on food grown on composted soil where artificials were banned were able to mix with other oxen infected with foot-and-mouth disease, and even rub noses with them, without suffering any ill effects. He tells how health has been restored to sugar cane, coffee, tea, cotton, rice, wheat, vines, fruit, tobacco, potatoes and leguminous crops by the simple method of creating a healthy soil rich in humus.

What happens when artificial and organic manures are used in conjunction, and whether artificials affect all the vitamins in plants, or merely cause a deficiency of one, thus setting up a chain of causation for other deficiencies, we simply do not know. But it is not good enough just to write off Sir Albert and his supporters as cranks. The evidence that they can produce, together with the not very noticeable success with which orthodox science is meeting the rising toll of disease in the plant and animal worlds, makes it highly desirable that comprehensive tests of the claims put forward in this book should officially be made. It is noteworthy, in passing, that the believers in the efficacy of organic manuring seem more eager for such a show-down than the more orthodox scientists and the purveyors of artificial fertilisers.

Agriculture To-day and To-morrow is a compendium of agricultural papers read to the Royal Society of Arts by leading experts. The standard is remarkably high, and so it is good to have them collected under one cover. But, as is inevitable, the book suffers from such a wide variety of subjects with no definite connecting link. Mr. D. R. Bomford on modern farm machinery, Mr. G. H. Bates on the maintenance of the ploughed-up area after the war, and Mr. Anthony Hurd on research and the farmer, are all particularly good. Sir John Russell states a reasoned case for producing at least half our post-war food from our own soil, even with the increased consumption arising from a national nutrition programme, without the need for any drastic financial measures. He also contributes an admirable introduction, in which he dispels a number of fallacies commonly held about British farming.

Among these is the idea that England is agriculturally backward because, among other things, her livestock farms are small. But Sir John points out that this is common to Denmark, Holland, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. American cattle ranches and Australian sheep farms are large ; but the output per acre is low. We cannot afford such systems, with our handful of acres. Even Russia, re-planning her farms in large units, has had to set up family holdings, in which livestock tend to concentrate.

But this does not suit Mr. Orwin, who, in *Problems of the Countryside*, rides all his hobby-horses (e.g., large farms, large fields, large farm staffs presided over by highly paid managers), with gusto and charm. Mr. Orwin could not write badly if he tried, and he describes a countryside which he obviously knows as well as the back of his hand. This makes it all the more inexplicable, and also the more sad, that the agricultural remedies which Mr. Orwin propounds in these days could seldom be of any real benefit to the patient for whom he takes such scrupulous pains to design them. When, on p. 17, he goes out of his way to suggest that the present subsidies paid by the Treasury for the benefit of consumers to keep down the price of imported, as well as home-grown, food are subsidies to the British farmer (although farmers would be receiving far more money if there were no State intervention) one can only wonder what is biting Mr. Orwin.

L. F. Easterbrook

CRITICISM FROM ITALY

Saggi Critici. By Giacomo Debenedetti. *Edizione del Secolo. Rome.* 290 *lire.*

This volume of literary essays, by a distinguished Italian critic, was already in proof in 1938, when " with the King's approval, Fascism added a few touches to the Italian Statutes, in consequence of which it became impossible for certain boys to go to school, for certain youths to marry their fiancées, for certain lawyers to look after the affairs of their clients, for certain doctors to cure the sick, for certain authors to write books." This was the Italian version of the Nuremberg Laws which made pariahs of all the Jewish race. Debenedetti, being a Jew, received a polite letter from his publisher wishing him all the best, but excusing himself from publication. This denial was not the beginning of the story, and one would like to quote more from the author's ironically temperate preface, which gives an excellent picture of the gradual degradation of literature under Fascism and the substitution for genuine human documents of a " letteratura di corte "—a court in which ceremonial was saved at the cost of civilisation.

This volume consists of an article on De Sanctis, a series of illuminating essays on Italo Svevo, dating from 1929, and a number of shorter critical essays, all on Italian writers, including two on Pirandello and Moravia, which appeared weekly between December 1936 and July 1937 in the *Meridiano di Roma*, a review founded and directed by the author. These remarkable essays in literary criticism were received with loud demonstrations of praise, and a Milanese publisher proposed to bring them out in volume form. But after a prolonged see-saw of warm advances and coy withdrawals which the author humorously characterises as " schermaglie d'amore " he retreated finally with the excuse that though abounding in merit they were not " constructive." It was a fashionable word, and open itself to various constructions. To some, no doubt, pre-fabricated houses seem more " constructive " than those individual

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COLLINS

creations of the free mind of man which once set the seal of beauty on town and countryside. The "Court Literature" of Fascism had its own interpretation. In ours, no odder charge could have been brought against Debenedetti's essays. Their fascination lies particularly in the constructive quality of their approach to the personality of each individual artist, to the nature of the creative problem which confronts him and to the method he employs to solve it. His criticism has something of the same quality of percipient search as Henry James's prefaces to his own novels, and wherever one can check its conclusions, as for instance in the essays on Pirandello, Svevo and Moravia, and a wonderful diversion on Verdi in the essay on De Sanctis, one is delighted by its penetration and delicacy of perception. The elements of individual style, music, rhythm and personal aesthetic character preoccupy Debenedetti as they do few English critics, and one would much like to observe his reactions to some of our English novelists and poets, and to Proust whom we know to have been an important formative influence in his work. His only translation from English seems to have been *The Mill on the Floss*, rather a curious choice in 1940. Possibly this reached him through the French, as he shows no other sign of familiarity with English literature. It is to be hoped that the essays on Pirandello, Svevo and Moravia will be translated into English.

Debenedetti was born in 1901, several years after Svevo, discouraged by the complete failure of his second novel *Senilità*, had already turned from writing novels to mixing an anti-barnacle dressing for the keels of British ships. It was the necessity of learning English for his yearly visit in pursuit of this singular occupation that brought him into contact with James Joyce at Trieste, and it was James Joyce who recognised his genius and introduced him to the French *avant-garde* men of letters. Debenedetti's approach to Svevo, whom he read for the first time in 1925, and met only in 1928, shortly after Svevo's triumphal visit to Paris, and shortly before his sudden death, is particularly interesting for the light it throws on the mysterious neglect by Italians of their greatest modern novelist. Debenedetti does not hide the difficulties which Svevo's peculiar style presented to him at first, and his final vindication of it is singularly interesting to non-Italian readers, to whom, through very ignorance, it presented no obstacle.

BERYL DE ZOETE

AIR-MINDEDNESS

To-morrow's Airliners, Airways and Airports. By S. E. VEALE. *Pilot Press.* 15*s*.

For a nation which owes its very survival to airmen and aircraft Britain is strangely disinterested in the element of the air. During the whole course of the General Election, as a candidate I was never asked a question about the administration and government of air matters. Certainly there was the occasional question about preservation of military air forces; but no concern was expressed about the civil order of the air.

The reason for this is to be found perhaps in the lack of personal experience of citizens of a small country with plenty of trains. If one were to stop every passer-by who was not wearing uniform in High Holborn outside the NEW STATESMAN office, there would be precious few who had ever set foot in an aircraft or, for that matter, had any intention of doing so. Yet after these many hundreds of years of seafaring the British must surely now face a new orientation and regard themselves as an air-faring people. World responsibilities in administration, international commitments, trade and security rest upon communication by air. It is no longer an affair of luxury, of "orange blossom for the wedding flown from the south of France," of faster mails, of what the R.A.F. called V.I.P.s. The possession of air fleets, ports, facilities and of airmen is a routine necessity, and the sooner the magic of peaceful air traffic gets into the blood of the people the better.

I wish Mr. S. E. Veale's book had a plain attractive title, could be bought for a few pence, and could be printed in millions—though I would not deny the author his proper reward or overlook his publisher's difficulty of production in times of paper shortage. For his book is an exhaustive, sane (though I for one don't agree with all his views) and practical encyclopædia of current air matters such as should be at the elbow of every citizen when the architecture of air traffic is being formulated.

There are technical matters, such as parasitic drag or the use of reversible airscrews, explained in comprehensible language. There are the facts, up to the time of going to press, about British and American airliners. There is the old flying-boat-versus-landplane controversy. There is much relevant information about airports and their relationship to the community. There are expositions of international law and customs. Even the kind of jobs which the air age is likely to offer are listed ("A number of gifted orato may be able to make a living by lecturing o various aspects of air transportation," state Mr. Veale, omitting nothing).

The comprehensive but compact survey covere in this book contains information that will hav a vital bearing upon our lives in the coming years while our commercial and our social enterpris takes to the air as it took to the sea. All wh have fought a war in that element are familiar wit the widening horizons of time and space. Now familiarity with that element for better or fo worse must be accepted as an immediate an useful requisite of peaceful living.

JOHN PUDNEY

The Philosophy of Jesus. By HARRY ROBERT and LORD HORDER. *Dent.* 5*s*.

It would do most people who in any sense profe themselves Christians to sit down quietly, rerea the Gospels and decide just what, to them, is im portant in the life of Jesus and why it is that th story has its hold on them. That is what Harr Roberts and Lord Horder have done, and the resu is a book that will be of value to many confused an morally disturbed persons. They discuss, in simpl terms, the value of the Gospels as evidence and keeping mainly to the synoptic story and discountin the legendary and supernatural, build up a pictur of Christ as they believe he was. Most of the rest o the book is an account of the teaching of Jesus base on extensive quotation from his recorded sayings. A unusual little book, which will make many peopl think again, reminding them of the ethics which the profess, but which, in days when the end is often hel to justify the means, are so seldom applied, at leas in public life.

Two Commonwealths. By R. E. HOLME. *Harra* 7*s*. 6*d*.

This is an extremely valuable little book. Th author gives a comparative interpretation of th political, social and economic framework of th British and Soviet Commonwealths. Mr. Holme i an experienced, well-informed observer who has firm and profound grasp of the historical origins o the institutional framework of both countries. H discusses their different religious backgrounds, the constitutional structures, he confronts the Sovi system with the western type of democracy, doing fu justice to both. The chapters on collective farm trade unions, planning, reveal a remarkable sense o perspective and sound political judgment.

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to bring the two great allied nations nearer to each other. One shortcoming of this fine study in comparative politics should perhaps be mentioned. The author refrains from giving notes, though he has made ample use of authorities. Moreover, some of the pictorial charts are certainly unnecessary, if not absurd. A sociological book is not a film—yet.

Week-end Competitions

No. 822

Set by Ahasuerus

A woman who is a nurse in the traditional sense of the word is now legally debarred from describing herself as a nurse. Comments in not more than 150 words are invited from Juliet's nurse or any other nurse famous in literature. Entries by November 6th.

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Six Guineas are offered for the best quotations to be inscribed on the base of a statue of Cézanne, Debussy, Proust, the Wright Brothers or Freud.

Report by W. R.

From a galaxy of suggestions I have room to print only a few of the most apt and ingenious—but I have included some with which I disagree. I recommend prizes of a guinea each to Robert Upcott, Barbara Rapaport, W. J. Strachan, Norma Hall, Hans Keller and a contributor whom I call X because the entry bears no name.

CÉZANNE:

Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses
But feeds on the aërial kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illume
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed, nor see, what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality!
(*Prometheus Unbound.*)
ROBERT UPCOTT

DEBUSSY:

La nature, attentive aux lois de mon empire,
M'accueille avec amour, m'écoute et me respire;
Je redeviens son âme, et pour mes doux projets,
Du fond des éléments j'évoque mes sujets.
(Alfred de Vigny.) BARBARA RAPAPORT

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic Harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweep
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze . . .
(Coleridge). W. J. STRACHAN

He who bends to himself a joy
Doth the winged life destroy:
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sunrise. (Blake.)
MELILOT

. . . made trees
And the mountain-tops that freeze,
Bow themselves when he did sing:
To his music, plants and flowers
Ever spring: as sun and showers
There had made a lasting spring.
(Shakespeare, "King Henry VIII.")
RICHARD POMFRET

PROUST:

In wishing nothing we enjoy still most;
For ever our wish is in possession lost;
Restless we wander to a new desire,
And burn ourselves by blowing of the fire:
We toss and turn about our feverish will,
When all our ease must come by lying still:
For all the happiness mankind can gain
Is not in pleasure, but in rest from pain.
(Dryden, "The Indian Emperor, IV," i.)
X

Hoc est
Vivere bis, vita posse priore frui.
(Martial Epig. 10.23.7.) G. J. BLUNDELL

Our youthtime passes down a colonnade
Shafted with alternating light and shade.
All's dark or dazzle there. Half in a dream
Rapturously we move, yet half afraid
Never to wake.
(Cecil Day Lewis, "Word over All.")
W. J. STRACHAN

There's not a joy the world can
Give like that it takes away.
(Byron, "Youth and Age.") J. R. TILL

The universe, as far as we can observe it, is a wonderful and immense engine; its extent, its order, its beauty, its cruelty, make it alike impressive. If we dramatise its life and conceive its spirit, we are filled with wonder, terror and amusement, so magnificent is that spirit, so prolific, inexorable, grammatical and dull.
(George Santayana.) ALLAN M. LAING

THE WRIGHT BROTHERS:

God is no botcher, but when God wrought you two,
God wrought as like a botcher, as God might do. (John Heywood.) NORMA HALL

How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
Makes ill deeds done. ("King John," Act IV, Sc. ii.)
E. F. C.

The world shall be thrust down, and we upborne! (M. Arnold, "Immortality.")

. . . superasque evadere ad auras,
Hoc opus, hic labor est. (Vergil, "Aeneid" VI.)
G. A. HEGGOTT

Crimes are not to be measured by the issue of events, but by the bad intentions of men. (Cicero.)
PHLATTOTHRAT

. . . so easy it seem'd
Once found, which yet unfound most would have thought
Impossible: yet, haply, of thy race
In future days, if malice should abound
Some one intent on mischief, or inspired
With devilish machination, might devise
Like instrument to plague the sons of men
For sin, on war and mutual slaughter bent.
(Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book VI.)
R. C. HORWOOD

FREUD:

Humanas actiones non ridere, nec lugere,
nec detestare, sed intellegere. (Spinoza.)
HANS KELLER

Cease, dreams, the images of day-desires,
To model forth the passions of the morrow.
(Samuel Daniel, "Sonnets to Delia.")
J. R. TILL

Of Its doing if It knew,
What It does It would not do!
(Hardy, "The Dynasts," pt. III.)
DOUGLAS HAWSON

Read, ye that run, the awful truth
With which I charge my page!
A worm is in the bud of youth,
And at the root of age.
(Cowper, "Stanzas to Bill of Mortality.")
HOWARD PATTERSON

A heart, where dread was never so imprest
To hide the thought that might the truth advance.
(Earl of Surrey.) C. CROSSETT

Weil wir Illusionen zerstoeren, wirft man uns vor
dass wir die Ideale in Gefahr bringen.
(Because we destroy illusions, we are reproached
with endangering ideals.) (Freud.)
HANS KELLER

For of the soule the bodie forme doth take,
For soule is forme and doth the bodie make.
(Spenser.) J. HOLLAND

Personal

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